

**PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE CAUSES OF POOR  
PERFORMANCE IN GRADE 12 AT SEHLABENG HIGH SCHOOL  
IN MANYATSENG**

**BY**

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE**

**MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS**

**IN THE  
SCHOOL OF TEACHER EDUCATION**

**FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES**

**AT THE  
CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, FREE STATE  
BLOEMFONTEIN**

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AUGUST 2007**

## **DECLARATION**

I, Emily Motlalepule Njeya, declare that:

**PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE CAUSES OF POOR PERFORMANCE IN GRADE 12  
AT SEHLABENG HIGH SCHOOL IN MANYATSENG**

is my own work and that all the resources quoted or used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

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EMILY MOTLALEPULE NJEYA

MAY 2006

## **DEDICATION**

To my husband, Simon Njeya, for his constant and consistent support. He is a source of inspiration to me. I am grateful to him, and his support is highly valued.

To my late parents, brother and sister whose untimely departures sparked off the inspiration that has sustained me this far.

Lastly to my dearest daughters Dorcas, Hlekiwe, Thenjiwe and their brother Mxolisi whose thoughts flowed in me too, towards the realization of this dream. Thank you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my appreciation to Prof M. G. Mahlomaholo, whose comments on various drafts of this work have helped me a great deal.

Thanks to Maloti Printers for supporting this work and for their excellent editorial work. Thanks also to Mr Riaan Jonker and Ms Lerato Moeletsi for their suggestions and encouragement.

Acknowledgement is also due to my respondents. You are great people! Your contribution to my work is extremely valuable. May God bless you all.

Many other friends and acquaintances, in addition to those named, have supported me by encouraging my sense of humour in trying circumstances. I would also like to acknowledge their contribution.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates parents' perceptions of poor Grade 12 performance at Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng. The justification concerning this investigation is that factors contributing to poor Grade 12 performance at Sehlabeng High School have until now, not gained much attention.

To arrive at the reported findings, the study used the qualitative research methodology. Six parents constitute the sample of respondents that were interviewed. They were controlled by the level of their education, being respondents with a university degree, respondents without a further diploma but with Grade 12, and respondents of other levels of education below Grade 12. Discourse analysis was conducted on the data collected by means of open interviews with the three groups of respondents. This qualitative approach enabled the researcher to access information relating to the parents' perceptions of low performance in Grade 12 at Sehlabeng High School.

Although the study is careful not to make strong causal inferences between meaning construction (signification) and performance, the results show that low performance is due to different factors such as parental involvement, school leadership and management, lack of discipline among teachers and students, poverty, teachers' attitudes, climate of the school and inadequate training of teachers.

Grounded on the above findings and conclusions, the study recommends that efforts should be made to involve different stakeholders such as parents, the principal, educators and students at the school. The low performance may be improved when the different parties become aware of the situation and are empowered with effective strategies to remedy it. These strategies may be accompanied by enhancing positive self-feelings and expectations of what students are capable of, which may in turn impact positively on the level of performance. The researcher further argues that the current poor performance may be improved through collaboration and teamwork.

Further research needs to be conducted that will elaborate clearly the perceptions of parents about the poor performance of Grade 12 students at Sehlabeng High School, and what can be done to improve the performance. It is also recommended that the involvement and support of NGOs should be encouraged.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an orientation of the research study. The chapter will give an overview of the whole study, indicating the reasons why the researcher undertook research on the perceptions of parents on the causes of poor performance in Grade 12 at Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng. The background to the problem and the problem statement given will assist the researcher to investigate questions about the perceptions of stakeholders.

The research methods are discussed by way of literature review, where the theoretical framework and definitions of concepts are included. The research methodology and design are subdivided into subheadings indicating the respondents, the instrumentation, the data collection procedure and the data analysis. Finally, the presentation and interpretation of the results is presented. The chapter closes with the significance of the study and a summary of the chapter.

### **1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

It has come to the researcher's attention that for the past three years, Grade 12 learners at Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng have performed badly. Parents have become greatly concerned about this problem.

This low internal efficiency of the education system implies more wastage in the cost of education and public resources. Learners failing to complete their high school education within the minimum time increase the social cost of secondary education without necessarily increasing the social benefits. The consequences lead to social costs of billions of rand.

Attitudes of parents about their roles in education and their senses of efficacy affect their level of involvement. However Schneider and Lee (1990) suggest that the level of parental involvement in their children's school ranges from parents perceiving their roles solely as caregivers to regarding themselves as equal and active partners with schools. Hence, parents who believe they have the role in their children's education are more likely to be involved in the teaching and learning process.

A school is a unit within a society, and can only exist through co-operation with the school community. Establishing a good school community relationship has been a key ingredient to success in securing mutual participation of parents in decision-making, school activities, problem-solving, providing assistance and offering services to a school. However, parents generally have not been very involved in their child's education and a discrepancy exists between parents' aspirations to be more involved and their actual involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1996).

The occupations of parents are an important issue in determining their socio-economic background, because an occupation reflects so many aspects of economic, political and social life. Income, power and status in society are clearly reflected by occupation and level of education. The socio-economic background of learners may have some influence on their performance at school.

The education level of parents can also cause poor performance of learners, because some learners have parents with little or no schooling themselves. This implies that in developing strategies for helping Grade 12 learners to perform better, the ability of the parents to intervene cannot be over-emphasized.

Parental school involvement decreases as children move to middle and high school, partly because parents may believe that they cannot assist their children with more challenging high school subjects and partly because adolescents are become more and more independent during those years. Parents stop caring about or monitoring the academic progress of their children of high school age. It is a well established fact that

parental involvement has a positive influence on school-related outcomes of their children. Consistently, cross-sectional (Grolnick & Slowiaczek 1994) and longitudinal (Miedel & Reynolds 1999) studies have demonstrated an association between higher levels of parental school involvement and greater academic success for children and adolescents.

Parental school involvement promotes achievement, first by increasing social capital. That is, parental school involvement increases parents' skills and information (i.e. social capital) which makes them better equipped to assist their children in school related activities. As parents establish relationships with school personnel, they learn important information about school expectations for behavior and homework, as well as how to help with homework and how help children's learning at home (Lareau & Horvat 1999).

When parents and teachers interact, teachers learn about parents' expectations for their children and their children's teachers. Baker and Stevenson (1996) found that, compared to parents who were not involved, involved parents developed more complex strategies for working with schools and their children to promote higher academic achievement.

Social control is a second mechanism through which parental school involvement promotes achievement. Social control occurs when families and schools work together to build a consensus about appropriate behavior that can be effectively communicated to children both at home and at school (McNeal 1999). Parents getting to know each other and agreeing on goals, both behavioral and academic, serves as a form of social constraint that can reduce problem behaviors. When children and peers receive similar messages about appropriate behavior across settings and from different sources, the messages become clear and salient. Through both social capital and social control, children receive messages about the importance of schooling, and these messages increase children's competence, motivation to learn and their engagement in school activities (Grolnick & Slowiaczek 1994).

The importance of the Senior Certificate Examination in South Africa is an undeniable fact and often reflects the poor quality of education offered to learners, as they achieve low matriculation pass rates.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The research problem to be investigated in this study is the perception of parents on causes of poor performance in Grade 12 at Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng. Sehlabeng High School has suffered from poor performance at Grade 12 for the past three years. This has destroyed the image of the school with both the community and the Department of Education. Parents are silently revolting against the school. This is shown by the decline in the number of student admission of the school and poor attendance of meetings by parents. The school has recently suffered from vandalism, something that never happened before the poor Grade 12 results. Local business people no longer support the school in its programmes like it was before.

#### **1.3.1 DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The respondents of this research project are six parents of Grade 12 learners who attend school at Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng. The Manyatseng Area is the geographical area of interest to the researcher because it is an area known to the researcher since the researcher is a resident of Manyatseng.

#### **1.3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the perceptions of parents on causes of the poor performance of Grade 12 learners at Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng?

### **1.3.3 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of the study is to investigate, by means of literature study and an empirical investigation, the perceptions of parents on the causes of poor performances in Grade 12 at Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng.

In order to investigate this aim, the following objectives are envisaged for this investigation:

- To find out whether parents support and cooperate with Sehlabeng High School.
- To find out what effects do the parents' perceptions have on the general welfare of Sehlabeng High School.
- To find out effects perception on number of students and staff.

## **1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.4.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The researcher aligns herself with social constructivism, which emphasizes the importance of culture, the context of understanding what occurs in society and constructive knowledge based on this understanding (Derry 1999; McMahon 1997). This perspective is closely associated with many contemporary theories, most notably the developmental theories of Vygotsky and Bruner, and Bandura's social cognitive theory. (Derry 1999; McMahon 1997)

#### **1.4.1.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

By the 1980's and 1990's, the constructivist view of learning as knowledge construction emerged as a dominant metaphor. Constructivism has a long history in psychology, including the work of Piaget (1953) and Bartlett (1932) on assimilation to schema, the Gestalt psychologist's work on learning and understanding and Dewey's classical

arguments for a child-centered approach to education. However, the knowledge construction metaphor has only recently become the consensus view.

#### **1.4.1.2. OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM**

Effective learning is not a purely solo activity, but essentially a distributed one, i.e. the learning efforts are distributed over the individual learner, his or her partner in the learning environment and the resources and tools that are available to the learner (Salmon 1993). This perspective strongly stresses the importance of collaboration in productive learning, as reflected in activities such as exchanging ideas, comparing solution strategies and discussing arguments. Position participatory knowledge construction occurs when learners explore issues, take a position on the issue, discuss this position in an argument format and reflect on and re-evaluate their position in negotiations (Gruender 1996).

#### **1.4.1.3. FORMATS OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM**

Constructivism can take different forms. These forms include cognitive developmental constructivism, radical constructivism and social constructivism (Spivey 1997; Cobb 1996). In order to characterize social constructivism, the differences between the various forms of constructivism are briefly discussed.

In contrast, radical constructivism states that cognition serves to organize the learner's experiential world rather than to discover ontological reality. An objective reality can, at most, be called an inter-subjective reality (Cobb 1996). In this research project, the theoretical underpinning of the learner-centered approach is the social constructivist interpretation of learning and its implications for instruction. In developing lessons and in organizing the instructional approach for the experimental condition, the following theoretical interpretation of social constructivism acted as a guide: knowing is viewed as a social as well as an individual activity in which learners explain and justify their thinking (Cobb 1996).



#### **1.4.1.4. STEPS OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM**

Critical inquiry is a response to the experiences, desires and needs of oppressed people. The initial step is to develop an understanding of the world view of research participants. Central to establishing such understanding is a dialogic research design, where respondents are actively involved in the construction and validation of meaning. The purpose of this phase of inquiry is to provide accounts that are a basis for further analysis and are corrective of the investigator's preconceptions regarding the subject's life, world and experiences (Comstock 1982:381).

Secondly, critical inquiry inspires and guides the dispossessed in the process of cultural transformation. This is a process characterized as "teaching the masses clearly what we have learned from them confusedly" (quoted by Ferreira 1993). At the core of cultural transformation is a reciprocal relationship in which every teacher is always a student and every student always a teacher.

#### **1.4.1.5. NATURE OF REALITY**

Social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through human activity. The children learn by doing, and not by being told what will happen. They are left to make their own inferences, discoveries and conclusions. It also emphasizes that learning is not an 'all or nothing' process but learners learn the new information that is presented to them by building upon knowledge that they already have. (Gruender 1996)

Constructivists believe that learners construct their own reality, or at least interpret it based upon their perception of experience. Therefore an individual's knowledge is a function of one's prior experience, mental structure and the beliefs that are used to interpret objects and events. What someone knows is grounded in their perception of

physical and social experiences, which are then comprehended by the mind (Gruender 1996)

Social constructivism is based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge and learning. Social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through human activity. Members of a society together invent the properties of the world. For the social constructivist, reality cannot be discovered as it does not exist prior to its social invention. To social constructivists, knowledge is a human product and is socially and culturally constructed (Ernest 1999).

An individual creates meaning through their interactions with others and with the environment in which they live. Social constructivists view learning as a social process. It does not take place only internally, nor is it a passive development of behaviour that is shaped by external forces (McMahon 1997). Meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities.

Inter-subjectivity is a shared understanding among individuals whose interaction is based on common interests and assumptions that form the basis of their communication (McMahon 1997). Communication and interaction entail socially agreed upon ideas of the world and social patterns, which in turn rules language usage (Ernest 1999). The construction of social meaning, therefore, involves inter-subjectivity among individuals. Social meaning and knowledge are shaped and evolved through negotiation within communication groups. Any personal meaning that is shaped through these experiences is affected by the inter-subjectivity of the community to which people belong.

Inter-subjectivity not only provides the grounds for communication but also encourages people to extend their understanding of new information and activities among the group members (Rogoff 1990). Knowledge is derived from interaction between a person and their environment, and exists within the various cultures (McMahon 1997). The construction of knowledge is also influenced by the inter-

subjectivity that is formed by cultural and historical factors surrounding a community (Gredler 1997). When the members of a community are aware of their inter-subjective meaning, it is easier for them to understand new information and activities that arise in their community.

Some social constructivists discuss two aspects of the social context that greatly affect the nature and extent of learning (Gredler 1997). The first aspect is historical development inherited by the learner as a member of a particular culture. Symbol systems such as language, logic and the mathematical system are learned throughout the learner's life is the second aspect. These symbol systems dictate how and what is learned.

The nature of a learner's social interaction with knowledgeable members of society is important, as without interaction with more knowledgeable people, it is impossible to acquire the social meaning of important symbol systems and learn how to use them. Young children develop their thinking abilities by interacting with adults.

Transactional or situated cognitive perspectives focus on the relationship between people and their environment. Humans are part of the constructed environment (including social relationships), and in turn, the environment is one of the aspects that contributes to forming the individual (Bredo 1994; Gredler 1997).

When a mind operates, its owner is interacting with the environment. Therefore, if the environment and social relationships among group members change, the tasks of each individual also change (Bredo 1994; Gredler 1997). Thus, learning should not take place in isolation from the environment.

Social constructivism and instruction stress the need for collaboration among learners and other practitioners in society (Lave & Wenger 1991; McMahon 1997). Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that a society's practical knowledge lies within the relationships between practitioners, their practice and the social organization and political economy

of their communities. Social constructivity approaches can include reciprocal teaching, peer collaboration, cognitive apprenticeships, problem-based instruction, WebQuest anchored instruction and similar methods that involve learning with others (McMahon 1997).

Outcomes Based Education, which is currently a feature of South African education, encourages the learner to be able to construct knowledge, be responsible and have initiative etc. These attributes are all encouraged by Dews (1987) and his followers.

According to proponents of social constructivism, (Drew, 1996), its objectives are as follows.

- ◆ A child should be educated towards social utility in practical life.
- ◆ A child should be confronted with real problems.
- ◆ A child should be taught to be responsible, to have social insight and initiative and to co-operate in the communal sphere.
- ◆ A child must be able to solve problems surrounding him or herself.

#### **1.4.2 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS**

##### **1.4.2.1 PERCEPTION**

The Collins English Dictionary (2000) defines 'perception' as the act or the effect of perceiving, insight or intuition gained by perceiving, the ability or capacity to perceive or the process by which an organism detects and interprets information from the external world by means of the sensory receptors.

Macmillan English Dictionary (2002) states that perception is a particular way of understanding or thinking about something. The ability to notice something by seeing, hearing, smelling. The ability to understand and make good judgments about something.

The South African Concise Oxford Dictionary (2002) describes ‘perception’ as the ability to see, hear or become aware of something through the senses, the state of being or the process of becoming aware of something in such a way or regarding, understanding or interpreting something intuitive.

According to the Britannica Encyclopedia (volume 15), ‘perception’ is a process by which we observe and find meaning in the objects, events and people around us.

According to the researcher, ‘perception’ is becoming aware of something through the senses, especially sight, i.e. to observe or recognize something.

#### **1.4.2.2 PERFORMANCE**

Collins English Dictionary (2000) defines ‘performance’ as a test designed to assess a person’s mutual ability.

Macmillan English Dictionary (2002) defines ‘performance’ as the standards to which someone does something, such as a job or examination.

According to Ludwig and Bassi (1999) at least two approaches emerge as to the definition and understanding of what performance involves. One view maintains that human performance can be accurately and absolutely qualified. According to this view, the possibilities are less for a person to perform beyond the limits set by one’s inherited abilities and potentialities. According to this view, the environment, in as far as one’s performance is concerned, only provides a context in which those inherited potentialities will unfold (Piaget 1953). This view has been at the very basis of so-called objective and standardized tests that tend to argue that, based on a learner’s response to a carefully designed, reliable and validated question; it is possible to accurately

access an individual's level of consistent and constant performance (Lockhead & Verspoor 1991).

### **1.4.3 RELATED LITERATURE**

In developing countries, drop-out and repetition rates appear to be most common among learners from low socio-economic backgrounds. In such countries, the causes of high wastage and poor learner performance include poverty, malnutrition, absenteeism, inappropriate curriculum and examinations, poorly trained teachers, lack of textbooks and overcrowded classrooms (Lockhead & Verspoor 1991).

According to Finn and Achilles (1999) studies on the effects that variables such as resources, class size, learner classroom ratio and learner educator ratio have on learner performance, do not always give clear direction to policy makers. Education policy makers rely on a wide range of outcomes to gauge the impact of policies on student performance.

The various problems in historically disadvantaged school in South Africa have been constantly blamed on apartheid (Van Der Westhuizen 1999). Lack of adequate physical resources at disadvantaged schools are constantly highlighted as the main reason for poor academic achievement.

Lockhead & Verspoor (1991) state that recent research conducted in the Eastern Cape Province confirms that many schools in disadvantaged communities end the school day as early as ten o'clock in the morning for no apparent reason. They run on makeshift timetables and have teachers that either leave early or do not attend school at all. At the end of a month [payday], some teachers have been known to leave school during the course of the morning to attend to their financial matters.

Kleinman & Copp (1993) state that a significant relationship exists between self-concept and scholastic achievement and that a positive self-concept is one of the most

important factors in scholastic achievement. It is also believed that the academic self-concept, in particular, makes a more significant contribution to scholastic achievement than the total IQ of the learner.

Ferreira and Dreckmeyr (1993:78) argue that more emphasis should be placed on the development of a sense of self-responsibility for learning, both at home and at school. This idea puts the learner in the middle of this ongoing debate. Self-responsibility for learning has a lot to do with aspects such as the timely completion of assignments.

The California Department of Education (2003) indicates that teachers who blamed students for failing tests and other assignments were also likely to blame parents for a learner's underachievement. It was also revealed that teachers who blamed students were more likely to admit that they did not treat their students in the way in which they would want other teachers to treat their own children.

The negative characteristics, and the one neutral characteristic, that surfaced about teachers who blame parents for student underachievement, revealed details about the teacher's efficacy. Despite the fact that the researcher found that students have different learning styles, these teachers did not use multiple strategies to present their subject matter to students. Some of these teachers stated that they had not received adequate training in order to effectively teach the majority of their students. In fact, more than half of the teachers did not have full credentials, indicating that many lacked teaching experience and were not highly qualified teachers (U.S. Department of Education 2002).

The lack of resources is rated as the major cause of poor performance in Grade 12. Very few high schools in South Africa have electricity, libraries and laboratories. In some schools, learners attend class without chairs, chalkboard, doors or windows (Legotlo & Van der Westhuizen 1996).

Lack of student discipline is also a cause of poor performance. Educators argued that some learners are ill-disciplined and difficult to work with. Lack of respect for educators is the main cause of discipline problems in the classroom. When students are asked to do something in class, they protest and refuse to carry out the instruction.

Although teachers are the most important factor at schools that affect student achievement, it appears that, like the quitters and failures that Haberman (1995) identified, these teachers are not accepting responsibility for teaching their students, but are rather placing the blame elsewhere. Apple (1993) found that what teachers believe about education and students has a pronounced difference on student performance and achievement.

This pattern of teacher behavior based on attitudes and beliefs is often cyclical and, over time, detrimental to the academic and emotional success of a student (U.S. Department of Education 2002). As long as teachers engage in the “blame game” and refuse to accept responsibility for student achievement, the gap will continue to exist and students of color will continue to be subjected to inequality of educational opportunities.

## **1.5 METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

A literature study on the perception of parents on the causes of poor performance in Grade 12 at Sehlabeng High School in the Manyatseng area and an empirical study will be employed in this investigation. A qualitative research method will be applied. According to Meulenberg-Buskens (1997) this method employs naturalistic inquiry to establish the natural flow of events at school and how participants interpret them.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher adheres to McMillan and Schumacher’s (2001) definition of ethnographic research as describing the context of naturalistic events, that is, the terms of qualitative research and the analytical description of a group of participants with shared beliefs and practices in an educational activity.



### **1.5.1 RESPONDENTS**

The six respondents used in this study, three males and three females, were chosen through purposeful sampling. Two parents who have graduated from university, two parents without high school diploma but who passed Grade 12, and two parents with other levels of education. Their children attend school at Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng.

### **1.5.2 INSTRUMENTATION**

The researcher employed the Free Attitude Interview as a technique to collect data. According to Meulenberg-Buskens (1997), interviews are useful to obtain data on people's experiences, attitudes and behavior. The Free Attitude Interview can be characterized as a person to person method of obtaining information concerning an opinion in which the interviewer is non-directive. The interviewee is given more space than he or she is probably used to in a normal social conversation (Meulenberg-Buskens 1997).

### **1.5.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

The researcher wrote letters to the respondents asking for their permission to be interviewed. Suitable places and times were agreed upon both by the researcher and the individual respondents.

## **1.6 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

### **1.6.1 TEXTUALLY ORIENTATED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

#### **LEVEL OF TEXT**

The data collected through the interviews was transcribed and then analyzed as text in order to extract meaning. The data was analyzed through textually orientated discourses. The words of the respondents were investigated in order to disclose the influence of the ideology carried by each respondent. This helped to reflect the respondent's beliefs and to relate those beliefs to the respondent's practices.

Some of the categories in the framework for text analysis appear to be orientated to language forms, while others appear to be orientated to meaning. This distinction is a misleading one, however, because in analyzing texts one is always simultaneously addressing questions of form and questions of meaning.

Another important distinction in relation to meaning is between the meaning potential to a text and its interpretation. Texts are made up of forms which past discursive practice, condensed into convention, has endowed with meaning potential. The meaning potential of a form is generally heterogeneous, a complex mix of diverse, overlapping and sometimes contradictory meanings (Fairclough 1989). Texts are therefore usually highly ambivalent and open to multiple interpretations. Interpreters usually reduce this potential ambivalence by opting for a particular meaning or a small set of alternative meanings.

Text analysis can be organized under four main headings: vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure. These can be thought of as ascending in scale of complexity: vocabulary deals mainly with individual words, grammar deals with words combined into clauses and sentences, cohesion deals with how clauses and sentences are linked together and text structure deals with large scale organizational properties of the text.

### **1.6.2 DISCURSIVE PRACTICE**

Discursive practice involves process to text production distribution and the nature of these processes varies between different types of discourses according to social

contexts. Some texts, such as official interviews and great poems, are recorded, transcribed, preserved and re-read, while other texts are transitory. (Fairclough 1989).

There are specifically socio-cognitive dimensions of text production and interpretation which centre upon the interplay between the member's resources, which discourse participants have internalized and brought with them to the text processing, and the text itself as a set of trace of the production process, or a set of cues for the interpretation process. (Fairclough 1989).

Processes of production and interpretation are socially constrained in a double sense. Firstly, they are constrained by the members' available resources, which are effectively internalized social structures, norms and conventions and include orders of discourse and convention for the production and the distribution and consumption of the text. These aspects have all been constituted through past social practice and struggles. (Fairclough 1989).

A major feature of the three-dimensional framework for discourse analysis is that it attempts to explore these constraints. It is especially concerned with the second constraint, i.e. to make explanatory connections between the natures of the discourse process in particular instances and the nature of the social practices they are part of. Given the focus on discursive and social change, most interest is placed on this aspect of the process, i.e. determining what aspects of member resources are drawn upon and how. (Fairclough 1989).

### **1.6.3 SOCIAL INSTRUCTION**

Social practice has various orientations; economic, political, cultural, ideological and discourse may be implicated in all of these without any of them being reducible to discourse.

Social instruction makes three important claims about ideology: first, that it has a material existence in the practices of institutions. This opens up the way to investigating discursive practices as material forms of ideology. The second claim is that ideology interpellates subjects, which leads to the view that one of the more significant ideological effects, which linguists often ignore in discourse Volosinov (1993), is the constitution of the subject. The third claim is that the ideological state apparatuses are both sites of and stakes in the class struggle, which points to a struggle in and over discourse as a focus for an ideologically orientated discourse analysis.

A further substantive question about ideology is what features or levels of text and discourse may be ideologically invested. A common claim is that its meaning, especially the meaning of individual words (sometimes specified as content, as opposed to form), is ideological (Thompson 1984). Word meanings are important of course, but so too are other aspects of meaning, such as presuppositions, metaphors and coherence. A rigid opposition between content, or meaning, and form, is misleading because the meaning of the text is closely connected with the form of the text, and formal features of text at various levels may be ideology invested.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

One of the major focal points of this study is to identify and examine factors, through interviews, that cause poor performance, in order to provide an effective and efficient education service that will fully develop human potential and collaborate with stakeholders in order to ensure a sense of relevance and ownership. The study also strives to encourage a participatory decision making process, which will empower the whole community. It is hoped that this study will suggest ways to improve the matriculation pass rates. The school will be able to use these results in developing parental involvement programmes based upon parents' perceptions of the school. As a

result of this study, factors may be determined that will be useful in predicting the successful academic performance of students and consequently, help school performance scores.

The purpose of the study is to improve the support provided to the students, educators, parents and the system as a whole, so that the full range of the learning needs can be met.

## **1.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS**

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study and includes a brief historical overview of the existing problem, the problem statement and the aims of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a literature study regarding the perception of stakeholders on the causes of poor performance of Grade 12 learners in Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng.

Chapter 3 gives a clear indication of the research methods, design and the technique that was employed in order to collect data. It will continue the literature study on how learners, teachers and parents can adversely influence the matriculation results.

Chapter 4 presents the empirical research that was employed.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study and the recommendation for the alleviation of low matriculation pass rates in Manyatseng.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

At the end of this study, it will be advisable to come with the recommendations to address the problems of poor performance of grade 12 learners at Sehlabeng High School.

## **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the theoretical framework of social constructivism is discussed with its subsections, such as historical background, objectives, formats, steps in learning, nature of reality, rhetoric, role of the researcher, relationship with the researched, value and critique. The operational concepts are also defined, analyzed and briefly explored.

Related literature about the previous findings with regard to the research question is discussed.

## **2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The researcher aligns herself with social constructivism.. Social constructivism is based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge and learning. Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Derry 1999; McMahon 1997). This perspective is closely associated with many contemporary theories, most notably the developmental theories of Vygotsky (1980).

### **2.2.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Constructivism is not a new concept – its roots lie in philosophy. The first constructivist philosopher, Giambattista Vico, commented in a treatise in 1710 that “one only knows something if one can explain it” (Yager 1991). Immanuel Kant further elaborated this idea by asserting that human beings are not passive recipients of information. Learners actively take knowledge, connect it to previously assimilated knowledge and make it theirs by constructing their own interpretation (Cheek 1992).

In this century, Vygotsky and Dewey developed theories of childhood development. The beliefs of these and other theorists are outlined below.

#### DIFFERENT THEORISTS

- Piaget: Piaget's theory of cognitive development proposes that humans cannot be "given" information that they immediately understand and use. Instead, humans must "construct" their own knowledge. They build their knowledge through experience. Experiences enable them to create schemas or mental models in their heads. These schemas are changed, enlarged and made more sophisticated through two complimentary processes: - assimilation and accommodation.
- Vygotsky: Vygotsky's constructivist theory, which is often called social constructivism, has much more room for an active, involved teacher. Vygotsky believed that culture gives a child the cognitive tools that are needed for development. Adults, such as parents and teachers, are conduits for tools of the culture, such as language. Other than language, the tools the culture provides a child include cultural history and social context. Today, they also include electronic forms of access to information.
- Dewey: For Dewey, education depends on action. Knowledge and ideas emerge only from a situation in which learners have to draw them out of experiences that had meaning and importance to them. The situations had to occur in a social context, such as classroom, where students joined in manipulating materials and, thus, created a community of learners who built knowledge together.
- Bruner: Bruner identified three stages of development:
  - a) The enactive stage, in which the child understands the environment through physical manipulation and handling of objects – holding, moving, touching and biting.

- b) The ironic stage, in which information is carried by imagery – visual memory is developed but the child still bases his or her decisions on sensory impressions.
- c) The symbolic stage, in which the child is able to understand and interpret idiomatic expressions and use formulas to solve problems.

### **2.2.2. OBJECTIVES**

Before a child goes to school, he or she has already acquired a certain amount of learning that has allowed him or her to understand his or her environment. The years prior to schooling provide the basis for:

- Social understanding and emotional development,
- Physical dexterity,
- Multiple interpretations and expressions of learning,
- Group-work and the use of peers (collaborative learning), and
- Language.

The objectives of this theory, according to the proponents of it, are as follows: (as asserted by Drew (1996)).

- The child should be educated towards social utility in practical life
- The child should be confronted with the real problems
- The child should be taught to be responsible being, have social insight and initiative and to co-operate in the communal sphere
- The child must be able to solve problems around himself or herself

Due to participation in social practices, an essential aspect of situated learning is co-operative learning. Social interaction is essential for building individual knowledge, because it occurs through the process of interaction, negotiation and co-operation. Co-operative learning involves structuring tasks so that learners work together in small groups to achieve shared academic goals (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Learners are



accountable and responsible for their own achievement, as well as for the performance of the other members of their group. Learners also practice social roles as they solve problems, learn new material or create projects and documents.

Incentives are built into co-operative learning activities in order to encourage learners in the group to work together to teach each other components of the lesson. Co-operative learning is a powerful tool in teaching learners to respect and get along with each other and in improving the social academic climate of the classroom.

Effective learning is not a purely 'solo' activity, but essentially it is a distributed one. i.e. the learning efforts are distributed over the individual learner, his or her partner in the learning environment and the resources and tools that are available to the learner (Salmon 1993). Thus, this situated perspective strongly stresses the importance of collaboration in productive learning, reflected in such activities as exchanging ideas, comparing solution strategies, and discussing arguments.

Position participatory knowledge construction occurs when learners explore issues, take positions, discuss these positions in an argumentative format and reflect on and re-evaluate their positions in negotiations (Gruender 1996).

In summary, the overall objectives of constructivism are:

- ❖ Learning is a socially situated activity that is enhanced in a meaningful context. Learning can never exist in isolation. Many concepts might never be discovered if there is not interaction between learners. Conceptual growth can only come from the negotiation of meaning, the sharing of multiple perspectives and the changing of our internal representations through collaborative learning.
- ❖ Learning is inquiry-based and its main activities include the use of the inquiry method, the use of resources to find solutions and answers, investigations and problem solving.

### 2.2.3. FORMATS

Constructivism can take various different forms, which include cognitive developmental constructivism, radical constructivism and social constructivism (Spivey 1997). In order to characterize social constructivism the difference among those forms of constructivism are briefly discussed:

The main protagonist of cognitive-developmental constructivism is Piaget, who maintained that the developmental level of learners plays a role in their construction of meaning and knowledge. Both the social and radical forms of constructivism are built upon the views of Hegel and Vico, who spoke of different forms of knowledge associated with different societies or of the relativistic nature of knowledge and meaning (Spivey, 1997). However, the two positions differ on the function of cognition. From the social perspective, cognition is the process by which a learner's social and lingual settings eventually construct mental structures that correspond to or match the external structures (Cobb, 1996). Social constructivism starts neither with the external world as its fundamental concern nor with the individual mind, but rather with language (Dornbusch 1987).

In the present research project, the theoretical underpinning of the learner-centered approach is the social constructivist interpretation of learning and its implications for instruction. In developing lessons and organizing the instructional approach for the experimental 'condition', the following theoretical interpretation of social constructivism acted as a guide: knowing is viewed as a social as well as an individual activity in which learners explain and justify their thinking (Cobb 1996).

A basic assumption is that knowledge is a social product and is developed by the dialectical interplay of many minds. Knowledge is also actively built up by the cognizing subject (Ernest 1999). Furthermore, knowledge is acquired in and attuned to specific social and historical situations and conceptual development can be understood only in terms of the situational contexts (Cobb 1996) it is fundamentally learner-

centered, with learners actively involved with teachers and co-learners in the making of both individual and shared meaning. The special contribution of social constructivism relates to participatory co-construction of meaning in order to build common, shared and agreed-upon statements, premises, etc (Spivey 1997).

#### **2.2.4. STEPS**

First, critical inquiry is a response to the experiences, desires, and needs of oppressed people (Fay 1975). Its initial step is to develop an understanding of the world view of research participants. Central to establishing such understandings is a dialogic research design where respondents are actively involved in the construction and validation of meaning. The purpose of this phase of inquiry is to provide accounts that are a basis for further analysis and 'a corrective to the investigator's preconceptions regarding the subjects' life-world and experiences (Comstock 1982).

Second, critical inquiry inspires and guides the dispossessed in the process of cultural transformation, this is a process Mao characterized as teaching the masses clearly what we have learned from them confusedly (Ferreira 1993). At the core of the transformation is a reciprocal relationship in which every teacher is always a learner and every learner an educator.

Thirdly, critical inquiry focuses on fundamental contradictions which help dispossessed people realize how poorly their ideologically frozen understandings serve their interests (Comstock 1982). This search for contradictions must proceed from the progressive elements of participants' current understandings or refers to as 'partial penetrations'.

Fourthly, the validity of a critical account can be found, in part, in the participants' responses. The idea is to provide an environment that invites participants' critical reactions to the researcher's accounts of their world.

Fifthly, critical inquiry stimulates “a self-sustaining process of critical analysis and enlightened action” (Comstock 1982). The researcher joins the participants in a theoretically guided program of action extended over a period of time.

#### **2.2.5. NATURE OF REALITY**

Social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through human activity. Members of a society together invent the properties of the world. For the social constructivist, reality cannot be discovered as it does not exist prior to its social invention. (Lakoff & Johnson 1980)

Constructivists believe that “learners construct their own reality or at least interpret it based upon their perceptions of experiences, so an individual’s knowledge is a function of one’s prior experiences, mental structures, and beliefs that are used to interpret objects and events”. What someone knows is grounded in perception of the physical and social experiences which are comprehended by the mind (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

All information is sifted in different ways by different learners in order to create interpretation. The construction of meaning relies on interpretation and is influenced by the perceptions of learners.

According to Decorte (1995), learning involves an active, self-guided search for understanding in which learners construct their own knowledge. Learners make sense of information and educators become cognitive guides who help the learners. Therefore, the learning process has the following characteristics:

- Learning is constructive: learners are not passive recipients of information but rather construct their own knowledge and skills.
- Learning is self-regulated: this refers to the meta-cognitive aspect of effective learning, where learners are able to manage and monitor their own learning. The

learner is able to regulate learning, provide his or her own feedback and make judgments to keep him or her concentrated and motivated.

- Learning is situated and collaborative: effective learning is not a purely 'solo' activity, but essentially a distributed one, i.e. learning is distributed between the individual learner, his or her partners in the learning environment and the resources and tools that are available (Salmon 1993). This situated perspective strongly stresses the importance of collaboration in exchanging ideas, comparing solution strategies and discussing arguments.

#### **2.2.6. RHETORIC**

Language plays a very important role in qualitative research. The qualitative researcher is very aware that words carry various meanings, some of which are not intended. For instance, a person who is participating in research is called a participant or a respondent.

Interpretative or hermeneutic approaches, such as phenomenological strategies, see language as the most important tool for researching and understanding, particularly when dealing with human issues. The category of approaches allows the human being to speak for himself. This technique, according to this paradigm, restores the subjectiveness of human beings in research, as they are no longer treated as mute objects (Salmon 1993).

### **2.2.7. ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

The role of the researcher is to construct knowledge, and analyses and interprets what the researched say and do. The researcher provides explanations or shifts in the interview focus for informants to adapt their thinking along new lines. The information communicated is the importance of the data, the reasons for its importance and the willingness of the interviewer to explain the purpose of the interview to the interviewee.

After the researcher identifies a possible site, contact is made with a person who can grant permission for the research. Most researchers prepare a brief written statement that specifies the site, the participants and activities, the length of time for the entire study and the role of the research. Immediately following the interview, the researcher completes and types out (transcribes) the handwritten records.

### **2.2.8. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RESEARCHED**

The researcher analyses and interprets what the researched say and do. However the researched is free to construct their own world in their own words.

Interactive research depends, to a great extent, on the interpersonal skills of the researcher. These skills involve building trust, keeping good relations, being non-judgmental, respecting the norms of the situation and having sensitivity regarding ethical issues. The researcher relates to the participant as a person, not as a lifeless sponge “soaking up” the surroundings. Interpersonal emotions in field work are essential in data collection activities because of the face-to-face interaction. Feelings serve several useful functions throughout the research process (Kleinman & Copp 1993).

Essential skills include easily conversing with others, being an active, patient and thoughtful listener and demonstrating an empathetic understanding of, and profound respect for, the participants' perspectives.

#### **2.2.9. VALUES**

Research makes us good communicators and critical thinkers. Through interacting with people, we gather knowledge and become informed. Research advances knowledge, improves practice and helps to develop the scientific body of knowledge (Kleinman & Copp 1993).

#### **2.2.10. CRITIQUE**

One feature of constructivist-based education is the structuring of curricula around primary concepts. The teachers enter the classroom with one or two big ideas, not with a long list of stepping-stone skills and objectives. For an entire academic year, for instance, students in a 6<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics class studied ratios and proportions. The lessons were designed to develop the students' proportional reasoning abilities. The objectives were 'explored' in the natural and spontaneous context of the students' thinking, as opposed to simply being "covered".

Two additional related dimensions of constructivist programs are the uncovering of alternative conceptions – or “misconceptions” – and the attempt to understand the learners' point of view. Misconceptions refer to the theories students have generated to explain various phenomena, behaviors, interactions, theories that, from an adult's perspective, are wrong. Although the students' thinking may be wonderful, it may be based on faulty assumptions, lack of information or incorrect data. The teaching of

concepts, therefore, is not effective unless the child's present understanding of the concept is explicitly explored.

Again, constructivism refers to an internal psychological process. The teacher cannot demand that a student see an inconsistency and accommodate his or her thinking by developing a new mental schema. Rather, the teacher offers intellectual opportunities, carefully constructed as invitations, which maximize the possibility that new conceptual learning will occur.

Constructivism has to do with conflict. Within a context of growth and co-operation, conflict is the source of developmental progress. It is not the teacher's intent to structure a classroom in which conflict is avoided. Rather, it is the teacher's job to help students negotiate the frictions that inevitably arise in settings that provoke them to challenge their ideas.

## **2.3. DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS**

### **2.3.1. PERCEPTION**

The Macmillan English Dictionary (2002) explains 'perception' as a particular way of understanding or thinking about something, the ability to notice something by seeing, hearing, smelling etc, or the ability to understand and make good judgments.

The Collins English Dictionary (1983) explains 'perception' as the process by which an organism detects and interprets information from the external world, by means of the sensory receptors.



Britannica Makropaeda (1992:481) defines 'perception' as the process whereby sensory stimulation is translated into organized experience. That experience, or percept, is the joint product of stimulation and the process itself.

According to Donald and Lolwana (1997) 'perception' is how people "see" or understand the meaning of things.

The researcher defines 'perception' as the process by which we become aware of changes through our sense of sight and hearing. Relations found between various types of stimuli (e.g. light and sound waves), and their associated percepts, suggest that inferences that can be made about the properties of the perceptual process and theories of perceiving can then be developed on the basis of these inferences. However, the validity of perceptual theories can only be checked directly, due to the fact that the perceptual process is not publicly or directly observable (except to the perceiver himself, whose percepts are given directly in experience).

Historically, systematic thought about perception was the province of philosophy. Indeed, perception remains of interest to the philosopher, and many issues about the process that were originally raised by philosophers are still of current concern. As a scientific enterprise, however, the investigation of perception has developed as part of the larger discipline of psychology.

Philosophical interest in perception stems largely from questions about the sources and validity of what is called human knowledge epistemology. Epistemologists ask whether a real, physical world exists independently of human experience and, if so, how its properties can be learned and how the truth or accuracy of that experience can be determined. They also ask whether there are innate ideas or whether all experience originates through contact with the physical world and is mediated by the sensory organs.

A major goal of the Gestalt theory in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was to specify the brain processes that might account for the organization of perception. Gestalt theorists, including the German-U.S. psychologist, philosopher and founder of Gestalt theory, Max Wertheimer and the German-U.S. psychologists Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Kohler, rejected the earlier assumption that perceptual organization was the product of learned relationships (associations), the constituent elements of which were called 'simple sensations'. Although Gestalt theorists agreed that simple sensations could logically be understood to comprise organized percepts, they argued that percepts themselves were basic to experience.

### **2.3.2. PERFORMANCE**

The Macmillan English Dictionary (2002) defines 'performance' as the standard to which someone does something, such as job or examination.

According to Collins English Dictionary (1990), someone or something's 'performance' is how well they do in a specific task or how successful they are.

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2000) defines 'performance' as an action or achievement considered in relation to how successful it is or the ability to operate efficiently and react quickly.

According to the researcher, 'performance' is a person's achievement under test conditions.

This definition of performance involves how learners feel about their performance and how those feelings affect their reaction to subsequent tests. Constructing meaning about one's performance involves views and attitudes towards the given task. It also involves how confident pupils are that they will perform well, and whether or not that ultimately relates to the outcomes of their performance. Furthermore, it has to do with whether or not good performance is a reflection of a more positive disposition towards

work. Constructing meaning is about seeing the need to work hard and to be committed and focused. It is about knowing and finding meaning in what one does and it refers to the level of self-efficacy with regard to performance.

In order to understand performance, according to this view, one should not be blind to other contributing social, structural and individual psychological factors. Thus, the score (mark) that a student achieves – irrespective of how objective, standardized, carefully designed, reliable and valid the assessment procedures and instruments might have been – will always be a subjective value because performance cannot be absolute and static. It will always fluctuate and vary, depending on factors such as, (i) the ideology permeating educational theory and practice and the material conditions underlying such theorization and practices, (ii) the nature of the given tasks and the subject materials, (iii) the idiosyncrasies of the tester and the testee and (iv) the testee's level of motivation, inclinations and interests, which are sometimes due to socialization (which includes prior knowledge) and acquired skills (Brophy & Good 1987)

## **2.4. RELATED LITERATURE**

This section looks at the most recent findings and what they have to say with regard to the research question.

### **2.4.1. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents in Louisiana in America blame poor performance on poor parental involvement in education. If the relationship is viewed as positive, parents will probably feel more comfortable when visiting or contacting the school. When parents perceive this relationship to be negative, a barrier to parental involvement may form. The perception that a community has the administrative leadership of a school can

influence the frequency and number of contacts made by parents. If the principal of the school is perceived by the community as someone who does not listen to the concerns of parents, parental involvement will probably be limited.

In Louisiana, black parents perceive their level of involvement to be lower than white parents. This may have been caused by the difference in parental expectations about school achievement that some black and white families have (Hill 2001).

Many parents shy away from becoming involved in their children's schooling because their own parents were not involved, and therefore the parents lack models of parental involvement. Research tells us that the children who achieve the most are the ones whose parents are most involved. All parents can be involved and can have a say in what the school does (Hill 2001).

East Indian and Canadian parents say that adolescent academic achievement has been linked to several influences from the home environment, including parental involvement, family cohesion, parental control, disciplinary strategies and affective warmth. (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts & Fraleigh 1987)

Research conducted in North America has consistently shown that both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are associated with poorer psycho-social development and lower academic performance in children (Dornbusch, Ritter et al. 1987). In contrast, democratic authoritative parenting styles appear to promote competence and adjustment in the child. The children of democratic authoritative parents tend to score higher in psycho-social and academic areas than those of authoritarian or permissive parents (Dornbusch, Ritter et al. 1987).

According to Booth and Dunn (1996), parental school involvement in American schools is thought to decrease as children move to middle and high school, partly because parents believe that they cannot assist with the more challenging high school subjects and partly because adolescents are more independent (Eccless & Harold 1996).

However, few parents stop caring about or monitoring the academic progress of their children in high school, and parental involvement remains an important predictor of academic outcomes through adolescence. For example, one study demonstrated that parental school involvement was associated with adolescent's achievement and future aspirations across middle and high school. Hill (2001). Moreover, although direct helping with homework declines in adolescence, parental school involvement also declines. (Epstein & Sanders 2002).

Rugh and Bossert (1998:123) discussed the importance of community involvement in a programme referred to as Fe Y Algeria, which was instigated in Bolivia. FYA involves the parents in their children's education and works with the community to create a variety of formal and informal education programmes.

Although the details of the FYA might differ as one moves from country to country, Swope (cited in Rugh & Bossert 1998:123) highlighted the following as the basic steps of implementing the FYA in a community:

- ♦ A community group invites FYA to start a school in its area.
- ♦ A school is opened immediately with the resources at hand.
- ♦ Other local organizations are contacted to build a broad support system for the school.
- ♦ Community groups participate in the construction of the school so as to reduce labour and finishing costs.
- ♦ A parent association begins operation immediately and works closely with the principal of the school.

Among other factors that make FYA a success is the emphasis on the role of the community and democratic leadership (Reimers 1997),

In another study, the Social Forestry, Education and Participation project in Thailand (whose purpose was to change teaching, learning, school and community relations) the invaluable need for community involvement was identified (McDonough & Wheeler

1998). In the SFEP project, it was found that the community has much to contribute to the education of their youth. It is unfortunate that throughout the world, indigenous knowledge is viewed as having a minimal contribution to knowledge taught and produced in schools (McDonough & Wheeler 1998:50). However, SFEP helped to change the community's perception of their role in education. This study discovered that teachers who used parent or community knowledge in the classroom improved their teaching. When education is made relevant to the needs of the community, it becomes easier for a parent to participate in school issues and activities.

In South Africa, the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) paved the way for greater parental involvement in education. This system expects the parents to play a crucial role in their children's education and parents are required to share the responsibility of education with the state (Department of Education 1997b:27). Furthermore, the OBE approach requires the parents to use the knowledge that is gained to build and develop their community and country.

#### **2.4.2. SCHOOLS MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

According to Delpit (1995), parents and the leaders of schools in Louisiana in America are aiming to build a positive climate in education. Though hard to define, 'climate' is very powerful and the leaders of the school are the main component in shaping the school's climate (Delpit 1995). In the study conducted in Louisiana, when considering parents' perceptions of a school, a negative relationship was found between a school's administrative leadership and student academic performance. A positive relationship was discovered between parents' perception of the school climate and academic performance. Administrators need to be aware of their influence on the performance of students in their school and should attempt to develop a climate conducive to student success.

Legotlo (1988) emphasized the imperative relationship between a school principal's involvements in education management, in particular the improvement of classroom management, as an ingredient in a school's academic success. There is no single definition of education management, however Sergiovannic (1990) maintains that in order for a school to provide quality education for all learners, education management should include effective planning, organizing, leading and controlling, supervising, budgeting, staff development, and guidance and programme development.

Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (1999) expanded on Sergiovannic's (1990) definition by explicitly stating that, at school, education management is irrevocably linked to the authority structure of the school. The emphasis on the managerial and leadership roles of the school principal in education management has increased dramatically and that these roles need to be investigated and reviewed continually.

Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (1999) state that good education management by the school principal is essential and its primary focus should be on the promotion of effective teaching and learning. Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (1999) go on to emphasize that effective learning therefore forms the most crucial standard against which the success of management is to be measured. Hence, school principals as education managers occupy a unique leadership position among the other staff, learners and parents and exercise influence in structural, operational and instructional matters at school

Sergiovannic (1990) stresses that the successful accomplishment of school goals, especially learners' academic performance, will require new ways of thinking, new assignment of responsibility, new definition of leadership roles and a new approach to accountability by school principals. Sergiovannic (1990) reports that ex-model C schools excel academically due to good management, commitment to teaching and learning and low teacher absenteeism. The school under effective management will attain good matriculation results.

#### **2.4.3. POVERTY AMONGST FAMILIES**

Booth and Dunn (1996) state that impoverished families in North Carolina in America are less likely to be involved in schooling than wealthier families, and schools in impoverished communities are less likely to promote parental school involvement than schools in wealthier communities.

Research conducted by the Louisiana Department of Education has shown that educational deprivation was more likely to occur in areas where there is a high level of poverty. Impoverished children were the main concern under the Improving America's Schools Act, which allocated funds based on the number of poor children in an area.

Some black families experience ongoing poverty which may lead to a condition of emotional depression. These feelings of depression make it difficult for parents to interact with their children in a sensitive and positive way and consequently, this may impact on their perception regarding their level of school involvement. A healthy climate contributes to effective teaching and learning (Ferreira & Dreckmeyr 1993).

Wealth can be associated with, amongst other things, educationally relevant advantages. Wealth permits parents to provide books and other materials necessary for successful study as well as the means to give the learners the privacy and comfort that enhances serious study (Jubber 1994:137). Furthermore, Jubber (1994:137) contended that economic status correlates highly with other significant education performance-influencing variables, such as parental level of education.

The occupation of parents was an important variable in determining a learner's socio-economic background, because occupation reflects so many aspects of economic, political and social standing (Legotlo 1996). Income, power and status in society are clearly reflected by occupation and level of education.



#### **2.4.4. LACK OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS DISCIPLINE**

Parents perceive the major cause of poor performance as low commitment and morale of educators. Parents argue that the morale of educators is very low and can be seen by the high rates of absenteeism and truancy. When educators are late or absent from work, teaching time is reduced. Occasionally learners are left without educators in some subjects. One parent remarked that some teachers were absent from school particularly towards the month-end (Legotlo 1996).

According to Van der Westhuizen *et al.* (1999), parents argued that the lack of commitment by students and their disruptive behavior is also a cause of poor performance. Some learners are concerned about political activities and are leaders of disruptive organizations outside the school. Lack of job opportunities and high rates of unemployment among educated people demotivates students, for example, many educators themselves are unemployed and this encourages learners to overlook the value of education.

Research showed that a significant relationship exists between self-concept and scholastic achievement. A positive self-concept is one of the most important factors in scholastic achievement and, especially the academic self-concept, makes a more significant contribution to scholastic achievement than the total IQ of the learners (Meece 2002). However, a self-concept regarding the domains such as the family, friends and a supporting value system, is also important for scholastic achievement.

According to Van der Westhuizen (1996), some learners are ill-disciplined and difficult to work with. This affects the relationship between parents and learners. All these factors led to uncontrollable learners in the classroom and some learners being intimidated by parents and other learners. Some ill-disciplined learners deliberately ignore instructions from parents, leave the classroom during lessons, come to school late and leave the school before noon. It is unreasonable to expect such learners to perform well in examinations as they are surrounded by an atmosphere of no work.

#### **2.4.5. TEACHERS ATTITUDES**

Parents in California blame the low performance of their children on educators' attitudes and beliefs, teachers' expectations for student performance could become a selffulfilling prophecy. When teachers were told that certain groups of students were either successful or not successful academically based on IQ levels, they treated the students in a manner that supported and perpetuated the perceived level of the students, even though in reality, the groups had been switched. In short, LSES students and students of color who are already behind in their schooling are often not expected or encouraged to catch up and learn the skills necessary to survive in the dominant culture (Delpit, 1995).

Experienced teachers often verbally express negative attitudes and beliefs about students in urban schools, particularly students of color and LSES students (Terrill & Mark 2000). While studying, teachers in poor and middle class schools found that 70 percent of the teachers held negative beliefs about these students and their families. These beliefs, which reflected lower expectations and lack of teaching efficacy, included the ideas that ethnicity affects academic achievements, students living in poverty have lower abilities, behavior is related to social class, English language learners have lower abilities and deficient family background or parents prevent students from learning effectively. (Terrill & Mark 2000)

#### **2.4.6. CLIMATE OF THE SCHOOL**

The climate and culture of a school may directly influence the level of parental involvement. If parents perceive the school to be warm, inviting, open to diversity and welcoming of their heritage and culture, a positive relationship between home and school can be developed. If parents perceive a school to have a solid curriculum and sound instruction, they may become involved in their child's education. If parents

perceive the accountability system as an avenue for helping their children to succeed, they may be more likely to take an active role in their child's education.

As outlined in the research of Ferreira & Dreckmeyr (1993), a school's climate has a definite influence on the academic achievement of a school. The investigation revealed that when attempting to improve student academic achievement, educators should be aware of the importance of the school's climate and should focus on improving it. Before significant improvement in academic achievement can be made, the climate must be perceived as positive.

Davies (1983) states that the school principal has to accept responsibility for any failure of teaching in his or her school. The school principals are responsible for school atmospheres that are conducive to harmonious and productive teacher and learner academic participation. It is the responsibility of the school principal to provide coherence in their school's instructional programmes, conceptualize instructional goals, set high academic standards, remain informed of policies and teacher's problems, create incentives for learning and maintain student discipline.

Davies (1983) is of the opinion that a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning is one free of disciplinary problems and vandalism and that creating a positive school climate in which teaching and learning can take place leads to a situation where learning is made exciting, where teachers and learners are supported and where there is a shared purpose. Learning will then not be difficult.

According to Potter and Powell (1992), school atmospheres which are not conducive to teaching and learning result in very poor learner academic achievement. Low matriculation pass rates are thus inevitable at such schools. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001: B-4), part of a principal's role as leader and manager is to create a school atmosphere that is conducive to learning and teaching. The Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001: B-4) adds that the following are some of the features that define such a school atmosphere:

- ◆ Individuals are given the responsibility, freedom and independence to take initiative,
- ◆ Staff members are encouraged to be creative and innovative,
- ◆ Individuals are allowed to take risks,
- ◆ The school has clear objective and performance expectations,
- ◆ The different structures in the school are encouraged to work together,
- ◆ The school's manager provides clear communication, assistance and support to staff,
- ◆ The behavior of both staff and learners is controlled through direct supervision,
- ◆ Everybody in the school community identifies with the school as a whole,
- ◆ Rewards are given fairly, consistently and in line with performance rather than through favoritism,
- ◆ Everybody in the school can talk openly about conflicts and criticisms,
- ◆ Communication within the school is NOT restricted to the formal hierarchy of authority.

Research has also shown that educational deprivation was more likely to occur in areas where there is a high concentration of poverty. Poor children were educationally at risk and were therefore the main concern under the Improving America's Schools Act, an act which allocates funds based on the number of poor children in an area.

A healthy climate contributes to effective teaching and learning. Unfortunately, a school's climate is usually ignored and often hard to define. Even the size of the school and student-teacher opportunities for interaction, affect the climate of the school (Lareau & Horvat 1999).

The South African School Act of 1996, section 23(a), stipulates that there must be one more parent in a school's governing body than the combined total of other members with voting rights (Department of Education 1997a:25). Throughout the world, there are efforts to involve parents in education as schools strive to improve the quality of education. Several writers in the United States of America have recently studied the

impact of social class on parental involvement in schools, and concur that the role of the parent in education is imperative, irrespective of social class (McGrath & Kuriloff 1999; Lareau & Horvat 1999).

A school is a unit within a society and can only exist through the co-operation of a school community. Establishing a good school community relationship is a key ingredient to success in securing the mutual participation of parents in decision making, school activities, problem solving, providing assistance and offering services to the school teachers out of school during school hours. Principals have no power over teachers, because of unions.

Parents send their children to schools with the expectation that they will get quality education in order to secure their future with a decent vocation. Policy makers and school administrators take it for granted that schools will provide this expected level of quality education. Frequently, education policy designers view community participation as a panacea for whatever is going wrong or missing in educational delivery (Rugh & Bossert 1998:166). Since parents are part of a larger society, they constitute a significant section of the community pertaining to educational matters.

In the current climate of educational changes in South Africa, researchers are focusing on factors that might have an impact on the learner's achievement, especially in terms of scholastic achievement. The learner's background is considered to be crucial. (Jubber 1994)

#### **2.4.7. INADEQUATE TRAINING OF TEACHERS**

According to Riley (1998), in the public system in California, a teacher is determined to be qualified or not by the type of license or credential he or she possesses. In education jargon, teachers are referred to as certified persons. Yet common sense, backed by many studies, confirms that possession of a credential alone does not equip anyone to teach at an acceptable level of performance. More importantly, experts say, is whether

the teacher possesses an academic degree in the subject being taught, has mastered the subject matter and is able to convey it to students in an understandable manner.

This finding is corroborated by the growing body of research that states that the majority of teachers are underqualified to teach in urban schools and to teach students from diverse backgrounds (Collins 1992; Delpit 1995; Gay & Airasian 2000; Haberman 1995; U.S. Department of Education 2002). In fact, more than half of the teachers in the current study did not have full credentials. This indicated that many lacked teaching experience and were not necessarily high qualified teachers (U.S. Department of Education 2002).

According to Van der Westhuizen (1996), there is a shortage of experienced and effective teachers in some learning areas, for example Biology and Mathematics. The literature has shown that developing countries face a challenge of badly trained or underqualified teachers who do not know how to explain some calculations or difficulties in subjects such as Mathematics and Physical Science. Inadequate teacher preparation and general limited academic background contribute, to some extent, to poor teaching and learning in some schools. Educators themselves are also the products of an inadequate education system.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the researcher explained the operational concepts from the statement of the problem, and explored the research question through a literature study in order to gain insight from the findings of previous researchers.

### **2.5.1 RELATED LITERATURE**

Findings indicated that the way in which parents perceived the administrative leadership of the school, the curriculum and instruction of the school and the school climate was a good predictor of school performance. There were also significant relationships between the way in which parents perceived their involvement and academic performance, the poverty level of the school and the school's location.

Epstein & Sanders (2002) described five levels of parental involvement as such: basic care for safety and health, appropriate positive home environment, basic involvement with the school to maintain the flow of information about the child's progress and school activities, active involvement in the school as a volunteer, parental active involvement at home with homework and school-related activities and parental involvement in the decision-making process in the school. The attitudes of parents about their role in education and their sense of efficacy affect their level of involvement.

Other research indicates that a family's socio-economic level affects parental involvement in education. Chavkin (1989) reported that teachers rate parents who have low socio-economic status as being less involved in schools than wealthier parents.

More than anything else, this study revealed the major causes of poor performance in Grade 12 examinations. These causes include inadequate physical and human resources, lack of discipline and commitment by teachers and students, ineffective and unclear policies and failure to develop effective strategies to address the unanticipated consequences of implementing changes in the school system.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES USED IN THE STUDY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the research methodology used in this study. It focuses on the respondents selected, the data collection procedure, as well as the data analysis. The instrumentation used was the Free Attitude Interview. Its theoretical origins are discussed, as well as its nature and purpose, how it is used and how scientific the method is.

### **3.2 RESPONDENTS**

To make the study manageable, six parents from the Manyatseng community were selected through a process of stratified purposeful sampling. The strata were defined as parents who are university graduates, those who have passed grade 12, and those who completed other educational levels below grade 12.

#### **3.2.1 RESPONDENT W.1**

Mr. Ntswebeya is a male educator at Phedisano Primary School and also a parent. He was born in 1964 at Manyatseng, Ladybrand. He started his primary education in 1974 at Manyatseng Primary School. He obtained his senior certificate at Lereng High School. He furthered his studies through correspondence with the South African College of Education where he obtained his Primary Teacher's Diploma in 1996. He once more furthered his studies with Unisa where he obtained his Diploma in Education and his Further Diploma in Education (Educational Management). These achievements were followed by B.Ed Hons at the University of the Free State in 2005. He taught from 1987 at different schools. He joined the teaching staff of Phedisano in 1996. Ntswebeya is married and blessed with two children. He is a very active member of the community



and is involved in many activities, one being a chairperson of the Platberg, Thusanong and Masakeng block.

### **3.2.2 RESPONDENT W.2**

Mrs Tshabatshaba is a female educator and a parent. She was born in 1972 on a farm called Riverside Lodge. She matriculated in 1990 at Lereng High School in Ladybrand. She obtained her Primary Teacher's Diploma in 1993 at Vista University, followed by a B.A. degree in 1996. She taught from 1994-1996 at Sedibeng Primary School in Kroonstad. She left Kroonstad in 1997 to join the staff at Le Roux Public School where she is now a Head of Department. She is not married, but has two sons. She is a very active member of the community. At church she is on the committee for helping poor and needy people. She collects food and clothes from various people and donates them to poor families. At school she is a guardian teacher, helping children with emotional and behavioral problems.

### **3.2.3 RESPONDENT W. 3**

Ms Tshasa was born in 1979 at Qwaqwa, and then her parents moved to Ladybrand in 1981 where he started grade 1 at Manyatseng Primary School. After passing grade 7, she went to Wepener High School in town, where she says they dodged school during weekends to go and drink beer. Some learners even had affairs with teachers. She was ultimately expelled from school. Then her parents took her to Bloemfontein to complete grade 12, but she was unsuccessful. She fell pregnant and returned to Ladybrand. Her daughter is now 9 years old and in grade 3. Eventually Ms Tshasa attended Lereng High School where she obtained grade 12. She then went to Bloemfontein to study Computer Courses. She is now a successful business woman. W.3 was included in the team of respondents even though her child is not at Sehlabeng High School for purposes of finding out if she will send her child to Sehlabeng High School after grade 7.

#### **3.2.4 RESPONDENT W. 4**

Mr. Cebekhulu was born in 1950 at Middelpunt. He passed Grade 11 in 1972 and joined the police force in 1973. He trained at Hammanskraal. He worked as a police officer at Steynsrus, Ronxville, Ficksburg and finally at Ladybrand. He is a man of integrity and a disciplinarian. He is very soft spoken man, and smiles a lot when talked to. He is a church steward at the Methodist Church, and is one of the staunch members in the church. He is married to Pulane and they have 4 children. Due to illness, he retired at the age of 55. Now he owns a taxi, taking teachers and learners to school every morning. His son attended school at Sehlabeng High and failed Grade 12.

#### **3.2.5 RESPONDENT W.5**

Ms. Mmathabuna is a female. She was born in 1968 at Rockland in Bloemfontein. She started her primary school education in 1978 at St Mary's Primary School. She then attended school at Moemedi High School where she only completed grade 10. She was married in 1991 to Mr. Lipheko in Ladybrand. She has two sons and a daughter. She is living with her cousin's son, who is doing grade 12. She is not working. When employed, she works for two weeks and then stays at home. Now she is selling peanuts and sweets to children in her environment.

#### **3.2.6 RESPONDENT W. 6**

Mrs Sponki is a new resident of Manyatseng. She comes from a farm called Scottsville where she has passed Grade 6. Due to poverty and an early marriage, she had to leave school and work on a farm. She has two sons from her previous marriage. She resides in Lusaka in a shack, near a big high school. She is not working presently. When she was a farm worker, she cleaned her boss's house and looked after children. She says she likes drinking beer, but on Sunday she goes to church. When they ask parents to volunteer for cleaning at school, she is the first one to go; she likes working in the garden, growing vegetables and flowers. Her son is in Grade 12 at Sehlabeng High School.

### **3.3 INSTRUMENTATION**

I employed the Free Attitude Interview as a technique to collect data. According to (Jordan, 1998:70) interviews are useful to obtain data on people's experiences, attitudes and behaviour. Interviews are particularly important when one is interested in gaining participant perspectives, and investigating the language and meaning constructed by individuals (Bogdan & Biklen 1982 in Maykut & Morehouse 1994).

#### **3.3.1 THEORETICAL ORIGIN**

The term Free Attitude Interview technique is a translation of the Dutch term: "Vrije Attitude Gesprek" as used by Vrolijk, Dijkema and Timmerman (1980). The Free Attitude Interview developed its characteristic form during an industrial psychological research, the so-called Hawthorne research in 1929 in the United States. The researchers discovered that when they gave the interviewees the freedom to speak, the information obtained became more relevant than when they would use a structured questionnaire. This open type of interview provided them with the type of information which could be used to solve problems in the labour situation. Carl Rogers, the psychologist, affirmed the method in 1941 again. He stressed the importance of the interview technique as a means of reflecting the respondent's feelings in a therapeutic context (Vrolijk, Dijkema & Timmerman 1980). The Free Attitude Interview, as implemented in this study, follows the model of Het Vrije Attitude Gesprek, with one exception. Where the Dutch interview model distinguishes between a summary and a reflection as separate techniques, in this study the two techniques have been integrated.

#### **3.3.2 THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE FREE ATTITUDE INTERVIEW**

An interview is a verbal technique to obtain information. The Free Attitude Interview can be characterized as a person-to-person method of obtaining information

concerning an opinion, during which the interviewer is non-directive. The free attitude technique can be used in a two person interview, as well as in a group discussion. The interviewer summarizes, reflects, stimulates and asks for clarification. Within the framework of the opening question, the interviewee has all the freedom to explore her own ideas and suggest new topics which may be, according to her, of importance to the opinion expressed. The interviewer is not allowed to ask new questions during the interview. The main interviewer qualities necessary to conduct a free attitude interview successfully, are a feeling of respect for the respondent and an interest in listening to her opinion. Together, respect and interest form the secret of the art of listening. There is a difference between waiting for one's turn to talk and really listening. It is very difficult to fool respondents in a qualitative interview by displaying apparent respect and interest that one does not necessarily have. It must be stressed that the free attitude technique is only a helpful tool when respect for the respondent's person and interest in her view are communicated. (Meulenberg – Buskens 1997)

### **3.3.3. HOW THE FREE ATTITUDE INTERVIEW IS USED**

The techniques mentioned in the following sub-sections require a certain amount of skill to implement. Knowledge about them remains unimportant if the know-how and the skills to use them are lacking. The necessary skills can be acquired by practice. Even genuine respect and interest for the respondent has to be well communicated, in order to be effective.

As Seidman states: "Technique is not everything but it is a lot!" (Seidman 1991). The Free Attitude Interview is described as a controlled, non-directive interview because the interviewee is free to talk about anything she wishes, as long as it is within the framework of the starting question. Various techniques complement each other in obtaining this goal. A coding system for the techniques is provided in the text below, which may facilitate the analysis of the interview, especially in a training situation.

#### 3.3.3.1. INFORMATION (I)

The interviewer always starts the interview by giving some brief information (I) about herself and by providing the frame of reference for the interview. It is often also necessary to give some information explaining the background of the exploratory question, but it is imperative to keep this introduction as brief and clear as possible. It is not advisable to provide this kind of information later on during the interview. This would interrupt the interviewee's way of exploring and formulating her ideas and disturb the structure of the interview. (Meulenberg – Buskens 1997)

#### 3.3.3.2. THE EXPLORING QUESTION (EX-q)

The starting question (the Ex-q), the only substantive question in fact, has to be formulated in an open and vague way. The formulation of the Ex-q may not contain any suggestion. It is an exploring question, for example: "Would you like to tell me what you think / feel about...?" In fact, the Ex -q covers the interviewer's opinion or hypothesis, formulated in an asking way. For the interview to be a real Free Attitude Interview, it is important that the interviewer asks only one Ex-q, and only at the beginning of the interview. In an open-ended qualitative interview, it is possible to ask more exploring questions relating to the same topic in one interview session. In this type of interview, the interviewer will inevitably influence the interviewee's exploration of the interview topic. In such a case, we no longer refer to it as a Free Attitude Interview. (Meulenberg – Buskens 1997)

#### 3.3.3.3. REFLECTIVE SUMMARY (RS)

A reflective summary (RS) reflects back the interviewee's opinions and feelings, in the interviewer's own words. It is not a good idea to repeat literally what the interviewee has said. A reflective summary has a **structuring function**; it structures (orders) the information provided by the interviewee. This is very important for the interviewee as well as for the interviewer. The open structure of the Free Attitude Interview gives the

interviewee more space than he or she is probably used in a 'normal' social conversation. Few respondents are able to use this space to structure their own thoughts without the interviewer's help. The interviewee's reaction to the interviewer's reflective summary is a good **test for the interviewer**. A reflective summary should **stimulate** the interviewee to give more information; it has to be an invitation. The interviewer should reflect not only on the interviewee's actual words, the manifest aspect, but also the **feelings** behind them. The real meaning, the **ultimate message**, which is sometimes called the latent aspect, has to be captured in as **concrete** a way as possible. 'Concrete' means that the interviewer's reflective summary has to reflect the nature as well as the intensity of the interviewee's feelings. It is not important that the interviewer should use **perfect formulations** in her reflections. Stumbling may actually produce very good results, as it forces the interviewee to take over and reformulate her opinion or feelings again. (Meulenberg – Buskens 1997)

#### 3.3.3.4. CLARIFYING QUESTIONS (CL-Q)

The interviewer cannot actually ask for too much clarification (Cl-q). It is a well-known social fact that people (and inexperienced interviewers) think too soon that they have understood somebody else. Inexperienced interviewers also tend to define their new questions (the Ex-q, in fact) as clarifying questions. A real clarifying question should remain within the boundary of the information already provided by the interviewee. It will refer to an internal frame of reference. The CL-q question can be formulated as such: "Can you tell me something more about... (Interviewee's saying)"? "What do you mean when you say ...?" Sometimes it can be useful to ask for examples. The Cl-q question has to be handled with care, probably because it is not a type of question that is often asked in normal social contact. Some interviewees may find it intruding, even threatening. More often than not actually, respondents delight in it. (Meulenberg – Buskens 1997).

#### **3.3.3.5. PAUSE OR SILENCE (P)**

A silence or a pause can be very effective, giving both interviewer and interviewee time to think. The effectiveness of a good, silent listener should not be underestimated. In 80% of cases, the interviewee will resolve the silence within 10 seconds. (Meulenberg – Buskens 1997)

#### **3.3.4 HOW SCIENTIFIC IS IT?**

Qualitative interview data demands a qualitative analysis. Qualitative data analysis takes place in cycles and is integrated within the total research process. Within the Free Attitude Interview there is potential for the data to be collected, analyzed and verified by interviewer and interviewee together. The quality of the information obtained by means of a Free Attitude Interview will depend on the quality of this partnership. The ability to establish such a partnership depends on the skills of the interviewer & skills which may be acquired, not so much by reading a text about it, but by diligent training and practice. In qualitative research, the interviewer's subjectivity is not seen as a problem, but rather as an asset to be cultivated and refined (Meulenberg-Buskens 1997). Training in the Free Attitude Interview technique offers researchers the opportunity to explore and refine their individual style (Oskowitz & Meulenberg-Buskens 1997).

Quality in social science research is not a straight forward issue. Quality could refer to the relevance of a study to the degree to which it yields useful and applicable information, or to the degree to which it empowers people. Finally it could also refer to the technical quality of a piece of work, which is the degree to which it conforms to the methodological expectations of the community of scientists. (Meulenberg –

Buskens 1997)

### **3.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

I phoned the respondents and asked for permission to conduct an interview with them. We agreed on a time and different places for the interview. The Free Attitude Interview technique, as advocated by Meulenberg-Buskens (1997), was considered a useful tool for collecting data from the respondents. A tape recorder was used as I was interviewing the respondents to help me record information which otherwise may have been forgotten. Each individual interview lasted for approximately thirty minutes. Respondents were interviewed in English and Sesotho. They were given the chance to speak and construct their own reality. The data was then analyzed so as to identify similarities and differences. The findings, discussion and interpretation are reported in chapter 4. Questions were open-ended and based on how the respondents construct meaning. The questions focused on the reasons they advanced for offering particular meanings (see Appendix).

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

The data was analyzed by means of textually orientated discourse analysis, as formulated by Fairclough (1992). The data collected by means of the interviews was transcribed and then analyzed, as texts have an inherent significance in their very materiality. They are at once the finished products of one process. In analyzing texts, one is always simultaneously addressing questions of form and questions of meaning. Another important distinction in relation to meaning is the difference between the meaning potential of a text and its interpretation.

Text analysis can be organized under four main headings: vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. Vocabulary deals mainly with individual words, grammar deals with words combined into clauses and sentences, cohesion deals with how clauses and sentences are linked together, and the text structure deals with large scale



organization properties of text. The analysis of discursive practice involves the combination of what one might call 'micro-analysis' and 'macro-analysis'. The former is what conversation analysis excels at, by explicating precisely how participants produce and interpret text. But this must be complemented with macro-analysis, in order to understand the nature of the members' resources, including orders of discourse. Micro-analysis is the best place to uncover the information, and it then provides the evidence for macro-analysis. Micro and macro-analyses are therefore mutual requisites. While social practice embraces more than discourse, Fairclough places discourse practice in relation to social practice, specifically ideology and hegemony (Fairclough 1992:86). Fairclough defines "ideology as constructions of reality which are built on various dimension of forms/meanings of discursive practices and contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination." (Fairclough 1992:86).

Discourse as a form of practice, however, has an important reservation, especially in the case of Althusser (1971). Althusser can be regarded as having provided the theoretical bases for the debate, although Volosinov (1973) made a much earlier substantive contribution.

According to Althusser (1971:16), there are three theoretical bases which make important claims about ideology. Firstly, he claims that ideology has a material existence in the practices of institutions, which opens up the way to investigate discursive practices as material forms of ideology. Secondly, he claims that ideology 'interpellates subjects', which leads to the view that one of the more significant 'ideological effects' which linguists ignore in discourse, is the constitution of subjects. Thirdly, he claims that ideological state apparatuses are both sites of, and stakes in class struggle, which points to struggle in and over discourse as a focus for an ideologically oriented discourse analysis.

A further substantive question about ideology is what features or levels of text and discourse may be ideologically invested. A common claim is that it is 'meanings' and

especially word meanings (sometimes specified as ‘content’, as opposed to ‘form’), that are ideological (e.g. Thompson 1984). Word meanings are important, of course, but so too are other aspects of meaning, such as pre-suppositions, metaphors, and coherence. A rigid opposition between ‘content’ or ‘meaning’, and ‘form’” is misleading because the meanings of texts are closely intertwined with the forms of texts, and formal features of texts at various levels may be ideologically invested.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the respondents selected in this study and their qualifications. The chapter also presented the instrumentation used in this study, namely the Free Attitude Interview with its theoretical origins, nature and purpose, how it is used, and how scientific it is. The data collection procedure and the data analysis techniques were discussed. In the next chapter I focus on the practical conduct of the interviews, the interpretation of the data, and the presentation of the results and findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the data gathered, analyzed and interpreted through qualitative strategies as discussed in Chapter 3. This chapter reflects the researcher's interpretation of the six parents' perceptions on the causes of poor performance in grade 12 at Sehlabeng High School.

The six respondents were divided according to their levels of education, namely those with a university degree, those with Grade 12 but without a further diploma, and those who completed lower levels of education. The small number of respondents does not reduce the usefulness and validity of the findings presented herein, based on interviews with them. What is important in using qualitative strategies is not the number of respondents, but rather the quality of the information produced. McMillan & Schumacher (2001) convincingly argues that large sample sizes sometimes yield information that cannot be adequately managed and analyzed.

The data collected from the interviews allowed an analysis and interpretation based directly upon the opinions expressed by the interviewees. McMillan & Schumacher (2001) describes a three stage approach to qualitative data analysis, namely:

Description – outlining what has been witnessed during the process of data collection;

Analysis – identifying essential features and recurring themes;

Interpretation – searching for meaning and understanding.

These three stages acted as a template for the management of the data collected during this research study.

### **4.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF INTERVIEWS**

This chapter interprets the findings and relates them to the context of the argument and theory informing this study. As discussed in chapter 3, the procedures followed in

this analysis and interpretation, are those of discourse analysis of the discursive practices and social practices informing the production, dissemination and consumption of particular constructions (Fairclough 1992).

The transcripts of the interviews were read very closely by the researcher. Four major points that emerged from the interviews (or text, according to Fairclough (1992)) became sub themes, namely discipline of teachers and students, commitment by teachers and students, parents' involvement, and shortage of relevant and qualified teachers. From the theory discussed in chapter 3, it was possible to find similarities between the dominant discourses and the positions taken by those respondents who are highly educated those without a diploma, and those at other educational levels.

References to particular extracts from the transcripts are by means of the identified labels W1, W2, W3, W4, W5 and W6. These labels distinguish one interviewee from the other, as reflected in the Appendix of this dissertation.

#### **4.2.1 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Hall and Engelbrecht (1999:231) point out that parents need to be involved in their children's education and this involvement must include insight into their children's progress, participation in decision making and being critical of information on educational issues.

A school is a unit within a society and can only exist through the cooperation of a school community. Establishing good school & community relationships is a key ingredient for success in securing the participation of parents in decision making, school activities, problem solving, providing assistance and offering services.

**Respondents answered as follows:**

*W1: Parents are not actively involved in their children's education. They come to school only when they are called. We are never called for ideas. Our ideas seem not to matter although some of us want to be involved.*

*W2: I only go to school when there is a problem with my son.*

*W3: We are not being recognized at school because we are not educated. Everything is new. We are not even elected to become School Governing Body members.*

*W4: We like to help our children but we find everything unrelated to what we knew. Everything is new to us.*

*W5: I'm prepared to pay school fees maybe attend meetings but I cannot be expected to help my child with school work. That is teachers' work.*

*W6: I am not educated. I know nothing about these new things going on at school, so I cannot even help my child. No one cared to simplify the language for us. Many of us are not educated as the teachers, but when we are confused, we just accept what they say without having the courage to question them even in parents meeting.*

The above responses inform my finding many parents do not seem to understand their role as parents; some of them regard the school as being competent enough to deal with their children. Vasallo (2000) point out that parental involvement in a child's education is a strong predictor of learner achievement; typically, the more involved the parent, the better off is the child. Parental involvement and achievement ideology are linked, because learners tend to adopt their parents' ideology in regard to achievement. The truth of the matter in this study is that there is no collaboration between the

school and parents. Some parents can give their children emotional support but are incapable of helping them otherwise. (Vasallo 2000)

#### **4.2.2. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Effective leadership by the principal does not only concern skills, rules and procedures, but should also focus on the quality of the relationship with the members of the teaching staff (Gay & Airasian 2000).

*W1: The department have given the children the rights and abolished punishment, so it is difficult for the principal and staff to manage the school effectively. The principal cannot manage a big school and teachers.*

*W2: Teachers themselves do not co-operate. They make it difficult for the principal to manage effectively. The school's management is poor.*

*W3: Children are not supported and encouraged to learn. Teachers are too proud to help children.*

*W4: There is no working together of parents, children and management. We as parents we are only told decision and called only when the child has misbehaved. No teamwork between parents and the management of the school. Or is it because we are not educated? I do not know. We are not empowered to make decisions.*

*W5: The banning of class visits by principals and H.O.Ds makes it impossible for these heads to help teachers and keep discipline.*

It is clear that, without losing sight of the negative effects that the apartheid system had on the education system in South Africa, a systemic change in management strategies is required immediately in order to improve the current poor academic performance of learners at disadvantaged schools. The bureaucratic and laissez-faire

management styles currently in vogue need to make way for a management style that encourages inclusion and participation (Department of Education, 1997b).

From the findings above it seems that the management and leadership of the school is lacking in skills. The communication is poor between the leadership, teachers and learners. In the opinion of the researcher, the school needs to change their management strategies and adopt management styles that encourage innovation, transformational leadership and self-governance. Management must be collaborative, transformational and based on shared objectives.

#### **4.2.3 POVERTY AMONGST FAMILIES**

Poverty-stricken communities are also poorly resourced communities.

*W 2: I am poor and my child has to look for piece jobs after school. And he come late and tired and is not able to study or do homework.*

*W 5: I live in a shack with my kids. There is no privacy. Even if she wants to study, there is no private room to study in.*

*W 4: I sell sweets, cigars and Sotho beer to pay their fees. When he comes back from school he must also help with the selling.*

Parents do not think of ways of improving their lifestyle. They think that the problem of poverty needs to be solved by some external force/s. Family income does not explain how well or how poorly pupils perform at school – in some classes, pupils coming from comparatively well-to-do families tend not to perform as well as those coming from relatively poor homes. Therefore family income, as one of indices of the socio-economic status of the respondents, does not show significant differences among families and does not contribute to poor performance.

#### **4.2.4 LACK OF STUDENT COMMITMENT**

The level of learners' disruptive behaviour is increasing noticeably, which impacts negatively on their commitment to work.

*W1: Learners sometimes ignore the instruction of educators and promote a culture of 'no work'*

*W3: Some learners are more concerned about political activities and leaders of disruptive organization outside the school.*

*W5: Learners are demotivated because they do not have teachers. Then go to classes for a long time without a teacher. Some do not have enough books to study*

Van der Westhuizen et al. (1999) state that lack of job opportunities and high rates of unemployment among educated people are de-motivating learners. Since many educators are unemployed, learners tend to overlook the value of education.

#### **4.2.5 SHORTAGE OF RELEVANT AND QUALIFIED EDUCATORS**

According to Van der Westhuizen et al. (1999) literature has shown that developing countries face the challenge of badly trained and under-qualified teachers, as well as a shortage of teachers in certain subject areas.

*W2: There is a high shortage of experienced and effective teacher in some learning areas like Biology and Mathematics.*

*W4: Teachers who are less qualified do not know how to explain some calculation or difficulties in subject such as maths and physical science. They confuse students.*



From the responses above, it is clear that inadequate teacher preparation and general limited academic background contribute, to some extent, to poor teaching and learning in schools. Educators are themselves also products of an inadequate education system. (Van der Westhuizen et al. 1999)

#### **4.2.6 EDUCATORS' ATTITUDES**

Negative and harmful attitudes of teachers towards differences in our society remain a critical barrier to the learning and performance of learners.

*W 4: Teachers do not teach our children correctly because we are poor. When I cannot buy my child an instrument, he chases him away.*

*W 5: teachers are too proud to help our children achieve. They only help the clever ones. They say they don't want to waste their time with lazy student.*

*W 2: Teachers do not encourage our children to learn the only expert better performance*

*W 3: Teachers verbally express negative attitudes about our children. They call them names such as stupid and idiots. The school is full of student from the farm and now they label them quitters and failures.*

*W 6: If there is trouble at the school and you ask question, your child will be badly treated because they say your parent is talking too much.*

*W 1: Teachers do not use different methods to present their subject matter. They forget that student have different learning styles.*

From the above responses, it is clear that parents are aware of the attitude of teachers towards their children. Parents are aware that negative teacher attitudes may contribute to the low performance of their children. It emerged that many teachers in

that particular school are under qualified to teach students from diverse backgrounds, some lack teaching experience and are not necessarily highly qualified teachers. Parents blame teachers, while teachers blame parents for not helping their children with school work and for poor student performance. There is a great need for professional development that should aim at improving teachers' attitudes and beliefs about parents and students, and also to help teachers to understand how their attitude affects the quality of education at their school.

The fact that educators are compelled to make changes in which they have not had any substantive participation in policy decisions, frequently gives rise to negative attitudes and resistance. An additional subjective reality is that educators, who are resistant to change, find it threatening. Sometimes they are compelled to change proven teaching methods to accommodate different children. (Van der Westhuizen et al. 1999)

Objective realities have also been shown to play a significant role in influencing teachers' attitudes. Good in-service programmes and skills training in managing diverse learners may lead to attitudes becoming more positive. The provision of sufficient and high quality support services and resources and back-up from the school administration, are further important factors. In this regard, all stakeholders should learn to co-operate and collaborate as equal partners. Each person's knowledge should be evident and respected by the others.

#### **4.2.7 CLIMATE OF THE SCHOOL**

As evident in the research by Ferreira & Dreckmeyr (1993), school climate has a define influence on the academic achievement of learners. The present investigation revealed that when attempting to improve student academic performance, educators should be aware of the importance of school climate and should focus on its improvement.

*W 2: The surrounding is dirty. Papers lie all around the school. Children run up and down the stoep the whole day. Boys walk with shirt out of trousers.*

*W 3: Boys use vulgar language inside the premises. Students behave badly. They fight during school hours. Students have no discipline for teachers. Boys carry knives to school.*

*W 4: As parents we are not welcomed when visiting the school. When you visit the school you struggle to find what you want.*

*W 1: The teachers are fewer concerns with the poor or ill children. No communication between students and teachers.*

From the above responses, it is clear that the success of the learning environment is undermined when the surrounding environment is unsafe due to high levels of violence and crime. When the safety of educators and learners cannot be guaranteed, learners may be prevented from participating in effective teaching and learning, or these activities may be disrupted. As a result, the lack of safety in the learning environment becomes a problem.

#### **4.2.8 INADEQUATE TRAINING OF TEACHERS**

Literature has shown that developing countries face the challenge of badly trained and under qualified teachers. (Van der Westhuizen et al. 1999)

*W 2: There is a high shortage of experience and effective teachers in some learning areas like Biology and mathematics.*

*W 4: Teachers who are less qualified do not know how to explain some calculation or difficulties in subject such as Maths and Physical Science. They confuse students.*

From the above responses, it is clear that inadequate teacher preparation and general limited academic background contribute to some extent to poor teaching and learning in schools. Educators are themselves also a product of an inadequate education system.

Educators do not possess adequate knowledge and skills to address diversity and teach different learners. There appears to be a perceived inability to manage diversity, often resulting in feelings of fear and hopelessness and learners being referred out to special schools. Furthermore, misunderstanding and misperceptions of the teaching concepts appear to limit teachers' successful implementation of methods and procedures. In light of the above, the need for further training and ongoing learning is clear. However it appears that a negative attitude towards in-service training exists, and it does not always bring about desired changes. Educators are also unable to manage large classes with high learner/teacher ratios. (Van der Westhuizen et al. 1999)

A theme that correlates strongly with insufficient and inadequate training, is the perceived lack of educational and teacher support. Educators need teacher support teams and support services to assist them with learners. Closely related to this need, is their acknowledgement of the importance of collaborative partnerships. For this to become a reality, educators require skills in collaboration, in which they presently perceive themselves to be lacking. (Van der Westhuizen et al. 1999)

The selection of relevant teaching methods is very important because if this is not properly done, the whole lesson could be a failure. The selection of teaching methods is determined by a number of factors. These may include the lesson outcomes, the cognitive development of the pupils, the background knowledge of the pupils, the subject content, group dynamics in the class, size of the class, teaching media available, time available and, most importantly, the opportunity to encourage active pupil participation. There may, of course, be more factors which determine the selection of teaching methods. (Van der Westhuizen et al. 1999)

#### 4.2.9 LACK OF STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Student discipline is viewed as one of the major causes of poor performance. Some learners are ill-disciplined and difficult to work with. When the respondents were asked about discipline they responded as follows.

*W1: The student is very stubborn and has no discipline. Some learners intimidate teacher in class and they deliberately ignore instruction from teachers. They argue and fight female teachers.*

*W2: Lack of respect for educators is the main cause of discipline when student are asked to do something in class they protest and refuse to carry instructions. They come late to school knowing that nobody will punish them.*

*W3: I was also stubborn at school. That is why I did not finish my school. It is now that I realize that if you do not respect, you cannot go anywhere. So these children also do not have respect for their teachers and parents. They do not complete their assignment in time.*

*W4: As boys we used to respect our teachers. These students do not respect. We all drink beer at the tavern. They won't respect anyone even at school because they drink with some of their teachers. They even smoke. The children today have low morals and you wonder what the schools are doing. Education is being changed to the detriment of our children sinking morals. There is no discipline in our schools.*

*W5: Children do not have respect for teachers and even their parents. They lack discipline. They fall in love with teachers that are why the teachers cannot discipline them.*

*W6: I am afraid of these girls and boys. They do not have discipline. They kiss in front of us. They do not even care and insult each other even if we are listening.*

From above responses, it is clear that discipline is a major problem in contributing to low levels of achievement. The lack of discipline among teachers and students has

become progressively worse. Lack of respect for educators is the main cause of discipline problems in the classroom. Most students abuse their so-called 'rights' and the teachers are unable to curb the situation, especially since the abolition of corporal punishment. Because students do not respect the teachers, it happens that a teacher expels a student from their class, which causes the student to lose a lot in terms of learning. Students relax and neglect their school work until the last minute, and teachers are compelled to spend more time on student discipline issues.

#### **4.2.10 LACK OF EDUCATORS' DISCIPLINE, COMMITMENT AND MORALE**

The respondents argued that educator morale is very low.

*W1: Educators are always late for school or absent, so teaching time is reduced. They absent themselves and the principal cannot say a thing.*

*W2: Educators have to go on strike for their salaries/increments. Some are on sick leave every time.*

*W3: Teachers do as they like because principals cannot say anything, not performing their duties and late for school.*

*W4: Some teachers absent themselves from school particularly towards month end*

*W6: Teachers drink beer with children, how can they respect them?*

Lack of discipline among educators is a problem. Their morale is very low, which results in high rates of absenteeism and truancy. The causes of low teacher morale are poor working conditions, inadequate curricula materials, teachers feeling insecure, unclear and confusing government policies. Lack of job security has led to teachers marketing themselves in the private sector for worthwhile incentives. There are no textbooks and no substitute teachers when others are on leave. For three or more

months, students may be without an educator in some learning areas. Senior posts, such as that of deputy principal, are not filled. Educators work under very difficult conditions, with disgraceful emoluments. The principal responsibility of the subject advisor is to provide professional support. However, these officers do not meet the expectations of their clients, namely educators and learners. Resource constraints negatively affect the levels of professional support. Policy makers should consider the role of supporting resources to improve learning and teaching, and to boost the morale of educators. Teachers' commitment and morale need to be emphasized. (Van der Westhuizen et al. 1999)

#### **4.2.11 LAZINESS AND NEGATIVE ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS**

*W1: These children are lazy to study, they are just to go up and down the street with boys and girls and blame teachers that they do not teach.*

*W4: students themselves do not have time to study, they are lazy.*

*W2: Children are lazy because the teachers themselves are lazy. The children books are not marked some have only two activities up to now.*

*W3: When they are given homework, they write it in the morning. They do not even care whether it is correct or wrong*

There is a general agreement among all respondents that the problem of poor performance is exacerbated by their children's laziness and negative attitudes. Children do not have time for their school work, they feel they know a lot and they misbehave. At home the situation is often not motivating. There is no model of education. Parents themselves are not studying. Learners of parents, who study further, perform better. The respondents also believe that some teachers are lazy, because some of the activities in the students' books are not marked, and the teachers don't encourage students to learn. Those students who are lazy put the blame on

teachers, by saying that the teachers are cruel and do not teach. (Van der Westhuizen et al. 1999)

#### **4.3 HOW CAN THE LOW PERFORMANCE OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS IN SEHLABENG BE IMPROVED?**

Along with school professionals and support personnel, families, peers, and community members need to support and respond to student needs and goals. Individuals and groups need to take responsibility for guaranteeing educational success among all children (US Department of Education 2002).

*W1: Involve parents in decision making of the school. Discipline between students and teachers are the best medicine.*

*W2: Teamwork and hard work, commitment of teachers and student. There must be discipline amongst stakeholders. Children should do their assignment in time.*

*W3: Parents, teachers, learners and principal should work together. Time must not be wasted.*

*W4: The leadership and management should be skilled to run the school smoothly. The most important thing is discipline.*

*W5: Matitjhere a tlohele ho ratana le bana, a rute. Ba bitswe ka dinako tsohle sekolong. Ba boloke nako ya dithuto ba tlohele bolofa.*

*W6: Hirang matitjhere a rutehileng. Ba hlomphe mosebetsi le bana. Re bitswe dikopanong, ba tlohele ho buwa sekgowa. Ba fihle ka nako sekolong ba tlohele bolofa.*

From the above responses, it is clear that respondents agree on effective parental involvement, discipline, teamwork and most of all, that time should be respected. Teacher education is regarded as one of the central pillars of a desirable human



resources development strategy. The fundamental aim of teacher education should be how to teach effectively in order to facilitate learning.

Educators need to be empowered in order to become change agents in those areas where change is necessary. All school-going children should have access to educational support services. Collaborative management structures should be established through multi-disciplinary committees. Parents, teachers and learners will be beneficiaries of and participants in this service. General teachers with extra expertise, acquired through recognized in-service training, could form a core support team at schools and render support to both teachers and parents

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented the data gathered, analyzed and interpreted by the researcher. The strategies used for the data analysis and interpretation were discussed in chapter 3.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS**

This chapter summarizes and highlights the major findings of this research study. Finally the chapter makes recommendations and suggestions for future research.

### **5.1 SUMMARY**

#### **5.1.1 AIM AND GOAL RESTATED**

The aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions of parents on the causes of poor performance in Grade 12 at Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng.

#### **5.1.2 QUALITATIVE PROCEDURE HIGHLIGHTED**

In order to conduct this investigation, the qualitative method (in particular, discourse analysis) was operationalized. Qualitative methods enhance the understanding and the depth of meaning construction, even if there were only six parents in the sample. The nature of the variables under investigation made them more easily accessible and analyzable through qualitative strategies; hence the use of textually oriented discourse analysis.

Six parents were selected for in-depth interviewing. These parents were classified according to their levels of education, namely those with a university degree, those without a diploma but with Grade 12, and those at other educational levels. Each interview session lasted approximately 30 minutes. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed (see Appendix). It needs to be mentioned that although about thirty minutes were spent with parents for the purpose of familiarizing them with the researcher, they were not strangers to one another, since they come from a similar neighborhood (township). The familiarization activities took the form of explaining what the purpose of the interview was, as well as generally getting to know each other, and where we all come from.

### **5.1.3 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS IN A NUTSHELL**

From the analysis and interpretation of the interviews, it became clear that the perceptions of the parents interviewed, in terms of the low performance of grade 12 students at Sehlabeng High School, are the same.

#### **5.1.3.1. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

In general, parents have been given little recognition within the education system at Sehlabeng High School as the primary care givers of their children. They have been allowed little participation in decision making regarding their children's participation in learning programmes and the governance of the school.

It is clear to them that when parents do not take part in their children's education; children perform at a low level. The active involvement of parents and the broader community in teaching, learning and development is crucial. Such involvement includes recognition for parents as the primary care givers of their children and that they are a central resource in the education system. When parents are not given such recognition, or where their participation is not facilitated and encouraged, effective learning is threatened. A lack of resources to facilitate such involvement, and the lack of parental empowerment and support, particularly in poorer communities, all contribute to a lack of parental involvement in learning.

Parents are not involved in the process of assessment of their children and do not have access to all assessment reports. It is not acceptable that parents be denied access to reports on the grounds that the reports are intended only for professionals. Ensuring that parents understand their rights in respect of any assessment process and preparing them to play a more active role in the assessment of their children need to be part of training provided for parents.

As children grow older, parents shy away from becoming involved in their children's school, and they do not check or help them with their homework. Parents stop monitoring the academic progress of their children. Another reason for parents not taking part in school activities is that their own parents did not model such behaviour. Parents do not clearly understand their role in the school.

#### **5.1.3.2. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (1999) state that good education management by the school principal is essential and its primary focus should be on the promotion of effective teaching and learning. The aim of management and leadership of the school is the creation and support of conditions under which students are able to achieve learning effectively. Despite the crucial role which management needs to play, they receive little training on the dynamic of responding to diversity within the student population and developing supportive methods of learning. The whole responsibility for decision making tends to be on leadership and management which expect teachers, learners and parents to comply with the rules, rather than ensuring quality work.

The other factors inhibiting effective teaching are the absence of effective monitoring of performance and inappropriate processes for assessing learners. Styles of management and leadership have been limited, with a total lack of attempts to include key stakeholders (educators, parents and students) in the management of the school. There are few opportunities for parents and other community members to participate in decision making and planning.

#### **5.1.3.3. POVERTY AMONGST FAMILIES**

Wealth can be associated with educationally relevant advantages. Amongst other things, wealth permits parents to provide books and other material necessary for successful study, as well as the means to provide students with the privacy and comfort that enhance serious study (Jubber 1994:137).

The effect which sustained poverty has on learners and the learning process is closely linked to the lack of access to basic services. For students, the most obvious result of poverty often caused by unemployment and other economic inequalities is the inability of families to meet basic needs such as nutrition and shelter. Students living under such conditions are subjected to increased emotional stress which adversely affects performance and development. Additionally, under-nourishment leads to a lack of concentration and a range of other symptoms which affect the ability of the student to engage effectively in the learning process, thus resulting in poor performance.

Poverty stricken communities are also poorly resourced communities. They are frequently characterized by limited educational facilities, large classes with high pupil/teacher ratios, inadequately trained staff, and inadequate teaching and learning materials. Such factors raise the likelihood of learning breakdown and the inability of the school to sustain effective teaching and learning. Students from families where one or more of the breadwinners are unemployed or poorly paid, are more likely to leave school as soon as possible to go out to work to supplement the family income.

#### **5.1.3.4. LACK OF STUDENT AND TEACHER DISCIPLINE**

Some students are ill-disciplined and difficult to work with, which affects the relationship between educators and students. Lack of discipline leads to uncontrollable students in the classroom, such as male students intimidating educators and other learners. Such learners deliberately ignore instruction from educators, they leave the classroom during lessons, and they come to school late and disappear before the end of the school day. The atmosphere of no work has become the order of the day and expecting such students to perform well in examinations is akin to expecting a miracle.

A lack of respect for educators is the main cause of discipline problems in the classroom. When students are asked to do something in class, they protest and refuse to carry out instructions.

The lack of discipline among teachers is also a problem that causes poor performance at Sehlabeng High School. There is often no punishment for educators and learners if they commit any offence, so they practice late coming, absenteeism, and non-performance of duties. Educators frequently go on strike for higher salaries. When teachers are late or absent from work, teaching time is reduced.

One parent remarked that some teachers absent themselves from schools particularly towards the end of the month, some staff members are union representatives and are often absent on union business. Sometimes lessons are offered without direction or guidance from anyone.

#### **5.1.3.5. TEACHERS' ATTITUDES**

Attitudes play different roles in an individual's life. Baron and Byrne (1991) describe 'attitude' as the internal representation of various aspects of the social or physical world. The representation contains effective reactions to the attitude or object and a wide range of cognition about it (e.g. thoughts, beliefs, judgments). Attitude reflects past experience, shapes ongoing behaviour and serves essential functions for those who hold them. Various researchers have found that often teachers' beliefs and attitudes can be linked to the more generalized beliefs of their society (Baron & Byrne 1991).

Negative and harmful attitudes towards differences in our society remain a critical barrier to learning and development. Discriminatory attitudes result from prejudice against people on the basis of race, class, gender, culture, disability, religion, or ability.

At Sehlabeng High School, negative attitudes towards different learners manifest themselves in the labeling of learners. Sometimes these labels are negative associations between the learner and the system, such as 'drop outs', 'repeaters' or 'slow learners'. It is important to recognize the impact that this kind of labeling has on a learner's self-esteem. Sometimes learners are placed in a particular learning environment merely

because they are labeled as belonging to a category of learners for which a particular kind of educational placement exists.

At Sehlabeng High School, teachers often respond negatively in their classrooms. Such attitudes are exacerbated by a lack of awareness and inadequate training of teachers to deal with the different needs of learners. Children who cannot cope well are under valued in the learning environment.

#### **5.1.3.6. CLIMATE OF THE SCHOOL**

The research of Ferreira & Dreckmeyr (1993) shows that the school climate has a definite influence on the academic achievement of learners in a school. When attempting to improve student academic performance, educators should be aware of the importance of school climate and should focus on its improvement. Before significant improvement in academic achievement can be made, the climate must be perceived as being positive.

The school climate at Sehlabeng High School seems to be neither open nor invitational to parents. Parents mentioned that the school intimidates them and appears to be unwelcoming of their ideas. A parent stated that he goes to the school only when it is really necessary, perhaps when his child has done something bad. The Parents Teachers Association meetings are perceived as being for parents who can speak fluently and those who are not daunted by the presence of teachers. Parents are also not called upon for ideas to improve quality in the school.

The nature of a school and its ability to provide a conducive teaching and learning environment is undermined when the surrounding environment (as in the case of Sehlabeng High School) becomes unsafe due to high levels of violence and crime. When the safety of educators and student cannot be guaranteed, learners may be prevented from participating in effective teaching and learning, or these events may be disrupted. A lack of basic amenities at Sehlabeng High School, such as clean toilets, creates an

unhealthy environment which undermines learning and teaching and places students at risk.

Sometimes students are further placed at risk by conditions arising in the wider society. In many countries, our own being a case in point, students have been subjected to forms of political violence which not only disrupt the learning environment, but also lead to trauma and emotional distress. The learning climate should be able to accommodate the diverse needs of the learning population and enable all students to move around the environment freely and unhindered.

#### **5.1.3.7. INADEQUATE TRAINING OF TEACHERS**

The absence of on-going in-service training of educators often leads to insecurity, uncertainty, low self esteem and a lack of innovative practices in the classroom. This may result in resistance and harmful attitudes towards those learners who experience a learning breakdown, or towards particular enabling mechanisms.

In Sehlabeng High School, there is a shortage of experienced and effective teachers in some learning areas like Biology and Mathematics. Teachers who are less qualified do not know how to explain various calculations or difficult areas in subjects such as Mathematics and Physical Science. Inadequate teacher preparation and general academic background contribute to some extent to poor teaching and learning. Teachers are themselves also products of an inadequate education system.

Among existing teachers, there appears to be a disturbing lack of awareness and skills in terms of dealing with diversity among students, identifying needs of students, providing curriculum flexibility and evaluating support effectiveness. Teachers have unfortunately been led to believe that they are equipped to teach only certain learners and that specialists must take over if learners with problems are identified. Unfortunately this has led to labeling students when they are not good performers.



To deal with diversity and meeting the needs of different students at Sehlabeng High School, it is important to recognize that teacher training is needed. Teachers should be equipped with the necessary skills. Teachers expressed the need for teacher support teams to assist them with learners.

## **5.2 SUMMARY**

Based on the findings arrived at through discourse analytical procedures, if parents are not involved in their children's education, learning is not effective and low performance is a result. Where parents are not given recognition or where their participation is not facilitated and encouraged, effective learning is threatened and hindered.

It is important to note and acknowledge the critical role which parents need to play in the education and development of learners. Parents, educators and learners should volunteer and be directly involved in providing education and support to one another. The entire group of stakeholders should play a key role in enhancing effective learning and development.

A systemic change in management strategies at Sehlabeng High School is required immediately in order to improve the current poor academic performance of learners. The bureaucratic and laissez-faire management styles currently in vogue need to make way for a management style that encourages participation.

The introduction of collegiality can serve to increase the possibility of professionalism being nurtured and a more effective school being established. Effective leadership by the principal should not only concern skills, rules and procedures, but should also focus on the quality of the relationships with members of the teaching staff. The development of trust through the practice of shared responsibility and collegiality will assist the principal in transforming the current management and leadership style.

Poverty exerts a direct influence on parents' mental health and self perception through increased stress resulting from the struggle to make ends meet. Poverty also has indirect effects on children's early school outcomes, because its adverse effects on parents are in turn associated with lower parental involvement in the school.

Because parents in lower socio-economic families often have fewer years of education themselves and possibly harbor negative experiences of school, they often feel ill equipped to question the teacher or the school. Impoverished families are less likely to promote parental school involvement than families in wealthier communities. Compared to more advantaged parents, parents in impoverished communities often need much more information about how to promote achievement in their children. They need to overcome their own negative school experiences and they often have less social capital.

The lack of discipline among teachers and students is becoming a major problem. There is often no punishment when they commit an offence. Teachers and students have become absorbed into a culture of non-teaching, where they arrive at school late or merely stay at home, roam the streets or turn to vandalism and crime, rather than focusing on their school work. There is no self discipline among teachers and students. There is no respect for each other. It is difficult for teachers to control students because they come to school carrying weapons and drugs. Some of the teachers do drugs with students, which is why it becomes impossible to control them.

Attitudes play different roles in an individual's life. It seems as though attitudes have a cognitive (learned) component, an emotional component and a component of observable behaviour (Baron and Byrne 1991). A relationship between attitude and behaviour is therefore assumed to be the essential link; in other words, to ensure positive behaviour or teaching outcomes, teachers have to develop positive attitudes themselves. Negative attitudes towards differences and the resulting discrimination manifest themselves as serious barriers to learning and development. Negative

attitudes, a lack of awareness and labeling of students result in a range of learner needs being ignored and therefore not being met.

The climate of the school should initiate and support constructive and self-regulated knowledge acquisition processes in all learners. A powerful teaching and learning climate creates the appropriate instructional conditions to evoke in students learning activities and processes that facilitate the transition from their initial state, towards the disposition to productive learning, thinking and problem solving.

A climate of individual responsibility coupled with communal sharing, and mutual respect between students and teachers can encourage effective learning. A learning climate that enhances high performance of students should allow for flexible adaptation of instructional support to take into account individual differences.

Teachers do not possess adequate knowledge and skills to address diversity. The present form of in-service training does not always meet the needs of teachers. Teachers must be valued and provided with the support and training necessary to enable them to develop a supportive environment for learning and development.

### **5.3 CRITIQUE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The title of this research study underwent a number of changes. Initially it read as: Perceptions of stakeholders on the causes of poor performance of Grade 12 learners in the Manyatseng – Ladybrand area. Now the title is: Perceptions of parents on the causes of poor performance in Grade 12 at Sehlabeng High School in Manyatseng. The researcher decided to narrow the scope because she realized that researching all stakeholders in the whole area could not be handled adequately within the scope of a Masters research study. However most of the issues and concerns that motivated the initial title continued to influence the formulation of the current one.

A total of six research respondents were interviewed. Data gathered during interviews focused on the situation at Sehlabeng High School, which has a history of poor performance evidenced by low matriculation pass rates.

The fact that black parents were researched, strengthen this impression. The researcher is also a black person who in one way or the other, and at some stage of her development, also went through similar experiences to those of the parents researched. In short, the researcher was not able to distance herself from the process of the research reported in this study. The choice of research methods, including data collection and interpretation thereof, attest to this fact. The researcher chose to analyze data in terms of only one of the possible approaches to meaning construction, namely the emancipatory approach.

It is important to mention as another critique of this study, that it is marked by a number of conceptual tensions. The first one is the theoretical framework on which the research is grounded, instead of following the normal procedure of locating the research within a distinct framework.

Lastly the researcher wishes to acknowledge that it is possible to produce interpretations other than those presented in this study, because the unit of analysis herein is meaning construction, based on text analysis. Research on meaning (and its construction) is always about the researcher's interpretation of other people's interpretations of the world. "The researcher's interpretations are fluid, ever changing and removed from direct experience". Similarly, the interpretations of other people are also ever expanding and/or contracting, thus eluding fixed and static assessment.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

The parental role in education is crucial in ensuring the success of learners. Vassallo (2000:1) points out that parental involvement in a child's education is a strong predictor of learner achievement; typically the more involved the parent, the better off the child. He confirms that the key to school reform is the parent. According to Vassallo (2000:1), once parents assume the responsibility of advocating for and supporting their children's education, they will become partners with educators to create schools in which their children will thrive.

Shifts in the attitudes of parents, the school and the teachers are necessary and need to be pursued through various educational strategies. The rights of parents should be clarified. This includes due process rights, rights of notification and consent, access to records and participation in the development of the child's educational programme.

Parents and personnel should bring the strength of their differences to the joint task of enhancing the learner's education. Parents should be involved in planning and local policy making (e.g. through school governing bodies) with regard to the teaching and learning process itself, and in the development of a supportive learning environment for all students.

Effective parental involvement in the education of their children is a necessity. Parents should be empowered and equipped with the necessary skills to enable them to facilitate learning at home for their children from a very young age; make informed decisions (e.g. about early intervention programmes); participate actively in school governance; support the child after school; set goals for their children; become change agents and effective advocates in the struggle for the rights of all children; participate in development programmes for educators; manage and facilitate learning within a safe environment; access resources; become peer counselors to other parents with children who have difficulties; and participate in policy development, assessment and monitoring of equity in education.

In general parents have been given little recognition within the school as the primary care givers of their children. They have been allowed little participation in decision making regarding their children's participation in learning programmes and governance of the school. The recommendation of this study is that parents should be afforded full recognition.

## **B. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

McDonough & Wheeler (1998) suggest that collaboration amongst teachers is characterized by collaboration amongst learners. A strong sense of community, that has its roots in a management structure that is collegially and collaboratively based, has a dramatic effect on the way that learners and teachers view their school. This, in turn, has a direct influence on the teachers' sense of commitment and the learners' academic performance.

The participation of the teaching staff in strategic planning must be encouraged in order to identify goals and objectives for the school, through shared goal setting activities. This includes the creation of a shared vision. A sense of belonging, mutual respect and self evaluation should be encouraged, as this may modify the belief that the principal is the expert in all matters. Members of the staff should be treated as partners, rather than as subordinates, as this will encourage co-operative decision making. (McDonough & Wheeler 1998)

Six common characteristics for successful school communities which can now be identified as being required within this community: respect, caring, inclusiveness, trust, empowerment and commitment. Such an approach is further supported by studies conducted by McDonough & Wheeler (1998) who confirm the characteristics of collegiality as follows: open communication, overall and varied participation in the life of the school, prevalence of teamwork, learners and teachers sharing a vision for the future of the school, a common sense of purpose and a common set of values, all

members of the school care about each other, and all efforts and accomplishments are recognized and valued.

The principal is no longer expected to carry the burden of managing the school alone. A School Management Team must be formed to assume responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school and for the implementation of the school policies. It is the task of the school governing body (SGB) to determine such policies. This new understanding of governance should be at the centre of the reorganization of the school system.

The ultimate aim of management should be the creation and support of conditions under which teachers and learners are able to achieve learning. Teachers should receive training on the dynamics of responding to diversity within the learner population. Heads of departments and members of school management teams require managerial development training by means of a recognized professional qualification. These should be a management programme to specifically address these needs. The programme should empower candidates to lead and manage the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, in order to ensure continuous improvement and quality learning. The primary benefit of such a programme is that it exposes school leaders to new ways of leading and managing.

### **C. POVERTY AMONGST FAMILIES**

In the current economical and political climate, a large number of South Africans are subjected to unemployment. More than a decade ago, Van der Merwe and Berkhout (1991:96) were already worried that a high rate of unemployment would have a significant influence on the education system. Today all major stakeholders: learners, educators, parents, employers and the National Ministry of Education are concerned about the problem of poor learner performance in the Grade 12 examinations in South Africa (Legotlo et al. 2002:113).

New conditional grant funding from the national government is recommended for non-personnel purposes. Such funding should be used in both special and full service schools, to provide the necessary facilities and other material resources needed to increase access for those currently excluded from the fund.

Non-Governmental Organizations have played a central and invaluable role in providing support to schools. This involvement should be supported by Non-Governmental Organizations financially with the relevant experience and expertise should be contracted to assist in the development of educators, management and parents in all aspects.

#### **D. LACK OF STUDENT AND TEACHER DISCIPLINE**

The level of learners' undisciplined behaviour is increasing, which has impacted negatively on their commitment to work. Students ignore the instructions of educators. On the other hand, some teachers are also misbehaving. They do not show respect to students and their school work.

Teachers should be prepared to encourage learners to acquire and maintain positive attitudes concerning their own potential and skills. An environment of encouragement and positive reinforcement should be established, in which learners should be proud of their learning achievements, honored for their academic abilities, guided to set high academic standards or demands for themselves, have more perseverance, be more responsible, and be more enthusiastic about their school work. Educators need to help students to look forward to the future with confidence and to know that hard work will be rewarded with success.

There must also be a policy for the control and discipline of students at school. The South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996, section 8(1), empowers a governing body of a school to maintain discipline in the school. A code of conduct for students must be established at the school. It must guide students as to how they should conduct themselves at school in preparation for their conduct and safety in civil society. It must



set a standard of moral behaviour for students and develop leadership. It must equip students with the expertise, knowledge and skills they will be expected to evince as being worthy and responsible products of the school. The purpose of a code of conduct is to promote positive discipline, self-discipline and exemplary conduct as students learn by observation and experience. It must not be punitive and punishment oriented, but rather it should facilitate constructive learning.

The code of conduct must suit the development of the student and be appropriate to the different school levels. The language used must be easily understandable in order to make the content accessible. The format should be user friendly. It must contain a set of moral values, norms and principles which the school community should uphold. It should promote the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the creation of a proper and effective learning environment in the school.

When formulating the code of conduct as a consensus document and before adopting it, the governing body must involve parents, students, educators and non-educators at the school. After adoption, each stakeholder must have a copy thereof. The code of conduct must be displayed at the school and as far as possible be given to each student in the official language of teaching of the learners, which is recorded when he/she enrolls at the school.

Educators at the school should have the same rights as a parent to control and discipline the students, although the ultimate responsibility for students' behaviour rests with their parents or guardian. Parents are expected to support the school, require students to observe all school rules and regulations, accept responsibility for any misbehavior on their part, take an active part in their children's schoolwork, and make it possible for the children to complete assigned homework.

Every educator is responsible for discipline at all times, at the school and at school-related activities. Educators have full authority and responsibility to correct the behaviour of learners when such correction is necessary. In cases where a student

cannot adjust to the school and where his/her behaviour is objectionable in that it violates the rights of others, he/she is referred to the principal. Through consultation with his/her educators and the school-based support team, efforts are made to assist him/her to adjust. This may include referral to the education support services for treatment. Serious misconduct must also be referred to the principal of the school. However, a mechanism should be created to handle disciplinary problems in order to reduce the load on the principal.

The teachers must acknowledge that the attitude, education, self-discipline, ideals, training and conduct of the teaching profession determine the quality of education in the school. They must commit themselves therefore to do all in their power, in exercising their professional duties, to act in accordance with the ideals of their profession, as expressed in the code of conduct, and act in a proper and becoming way, such that their behaviour does not bring discredit to the school.

The teachers must respect the dignity, beliefs and constitutional rights of learners, which includes the rights to privacy and confidentiality. They must acknowledge the uniqueness, individuality and specific needs of each learner, and guide and encourage each learner to realize his/her potential. Teachers need to use appropriate language and behaviour in their interaction with learners and act in such a way so as to elicit respect from the learners.

Where appropriate, the teachers must recognize parents as being partners in education. They should promote a harmonious relationship with parents, and do what is practically possible to keep parents adequately and timeously informed about the well being and progress of the students. The teachers must conduct themselves in a manner that does not show disrespect to the value, customs and norms of the community. They must refrain from undermining the status and authority of their colleagues in order to ensure the smooth running of the school.

Teachers must acknowledge that the exercise of their professional duties occurs within a context requiring co-operation with, and the support of colleagues. They must behave in a way that enhances the dignity and status of the teaching profession, that does not bring the profession into disrepute, and they should serve their employer to the best of their abilities.

#### **E. TEACHERS' ATTITUDES**

Parker (1995) considered how educators' own culture, class, race and attitude affect their expectations for and decisions about their students and their families. She concluded that important decisions about people's lives are often made based on much more than the observable facts of the situation.

There are numerous variables that influence teachers' attitudes towards their teaching practice. The fact that teachers often feel that they have been compelled to make changes in which they have not had any substantive participation with regard to policy decisions, frequently give rise to negative attitudes and resistance.

It is well documented in the literature that once-off workshops and the 'one size fits all model' are frequently employed in education, but are ineffective (Ainscow, 1999). Such current practices tend to underestimate the long-term commitment to professional development that is required for real change to occur.

The recognition of professional development as a lifelong process, and as a way of life, is inevitable. Lecturers and facilitators in education, training and development need to take responsibility for preparing and supporting teachers to take cognizance of the contextual, complex and time consuming nature of change. Not only do teachers require ongoing, supportive in-service training and access to information and new policies, but they also need to be emotionally conditioned.

Change is difficult, but inevitable. It is guided first by vision, then by planning, then by action. No matter how much we want to hurry, change is methodical and slower than we might wish, but it does occur (Potter & Powell 1992).

#### **F. CLIMATE OF THE SCHOOL**

The teaching-learning environment should create appropriate instructional conditions to evoke in students learning activities and processes that facilitate the transition from their initial state toward a disposition to productive learning, thinking and problem solving.

The learning climate should initiate and support constructive and self-regulated knowledge acquisition processes in all students, including the more passive learners. From a realistic constructivist perspective, students' construction of knowledge and skills can be mediated through appropriate guidance by teachers, peers and educational media, such as educational software. In other words, the claim that productive learning requires good teaching still holds true. But this first principle also implies that systematic intervention should gradually be removed, so that the students become progressively agents determining their own learning. (Potter and Powell 1992)

The climate should allow for the flexible adaptation of instructional support, especially the balance between self-regulation and external regulation, and take into account individual differences in cognitive as well as in affective and motivational aptitudes. Moreover, the crucial influence on learning of motivational factors points to the necessity for balancing instructional intervention and effective support. (Potter and Powell 1992)

Taking into account the situated and collaborative nature of effective learning, a powerful school climate should encourage learners' constructive acquisition processes as much as possible in real life contexts that have personal meaning for the learners, that offer ample opportunities for distributed learning through social interaction and cooperation, and that are representative of the tasks to which students will have to apply their knowledge and skills in the future. The school climate should create opportunities to acquire general cognitive skills embedded in different subject matter domains.

#### **G. INADEQUATE TRAINING OF EDUCATORS**

The need for further training and ongoing learning is clear. However it appears that in-service training does not always meet the needs of educators. There appears to be a negative attitude towards in-service training and it does not always bring about desired changes. Until educators have enough qualifications, in-service work is meaningless to them. Educators need to update their methods.

Team work, sharing skills and inter-sectoral collaboration remain key mechanisms for accommodating diversity and preventing the breakdown of learning. Flexibility in teaching and learning styles is encouraged, with peer support being recognized as a major resource in the classroom. The active participation of learners ensures that they are able to move at their own pace and make use of their own capacities. Peer support increases awareness among learners of differences and ultimately leads to greater community awareness thus challenging discriminatory attitudes.

#### **5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In order to implement the above-mentioned recommendations, this study proposes that researchers interested in the upliftment of the status of all South Africans, should

embark on research that will produce knowledge. The proposed research should aim at putting such experience, which has been relegated to the margins and periphery of knowledge and power relations, into proper perspective.

There should be a conscious effect at all research institutions, like universities, NGOs and government, to contribute to the formulation and strengthening of a research paradigm and tradition aimed at the implementation and operationalization of the above-mentioned recommendations. In particular, such research needs to investigate further the specific aspects of meaning construction of the perceptions of parents on poor school performance. Future research should also develop specific programmes for educators that could be used at schools and other places where it will be possible to implement them.

It is suggested that further research should be conducted to find out whether similar findings as obtained in the present study could be repeated. Such research could be conducted by:

- (i) researchers coming from different experiential backgrounds than the current researcher,
- (ii) using different theoretical framework(s), methodologies, instruments, samples and/or interpretation strategies,
- (iii) in settings other than Sehlabeng, and
- (iv) Analyzing data, not on the basis of the dominant versus the emancipatory positions of meaning construction, but on positions between and beyond these two poles.

Such further research may also confine itself to any one of the many disciplines informing this present study, for greater unity and coherence. Another research project could investigate defining 'perceptions' and 'performance'. This implies investigating why there is poor performance in Sehlabeng High School, and yet high performance in other schools in Manyatseng.

Another interesting area to be researched could be following up the sample parents in this study and interviewing them again at the end of the academic year, to find out whether or not the manner in which they construct meaning is still the same, as well as the reasons therefore. It may also be helpful to find out if those students who were identified as being either low or high performers maintained their respective levels of performance.

The interviews with the sampled parents yielded a very rich reservoir of information that could be analyzed further, beyond the textually oriented discourse analysis (TODA), by means of other variations of discourse analysis, such as depth.

## **5.6 A FINAL WORD**

Conducting research on meaning and its construction was an interesting, but involved and labour intensive task. Analyzing at the same time issues of identity, culture and performance became almost overwhelming. The most important achievement of this research study was including the voices of the ordinary parents in Manyatseng and hearing them express their opinions. This process transformed ordinary experiences and feelings into knowledge. What remains now is to disseminate this knowledge as widely as possible, to complete the praxis of critical and emancipatory research.

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APPENDIX A

P. O. BOX 1290  
LADYBRAND  
9745  
30 March 2006

Dear Sir or Madam

**INVITATION FOR AN INTERVIEW**

I am conducting a research for my studies at UCT. My topic read thus, PARENT'S PERCEPTION ON POOR PERFORMANCE IN GRADE 12 AT SEHLABENG HIGH SCHOOL IN MANYATSENG.

I would like you to come and assist me in this regard. I would like to ask you some questions and hear your opinion. Your participation will be highly appreciated. If you agree to help I shall phone to confirm the details, where and when are we going to meet for an interview.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

E M Njeya

---

RESPONDENT

Thank you for your letter of the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2006, for inviting me for an interview. I am willing to help you.  
Thank you.

Yours faithfully

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## **Appendix B**

### **TRANSLATED TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW**

1. What is your perception regarding the poor performance of Grade 12 students at Sehlabeng High School?

#### **A. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

W1: Hei, parents are not actively involved in their children's education. We come to school when there is trouble, our ideas don't matter.

W4: I want to help my children, but with the tech.....nology, EMS, I know nothing. Very difficult.

W3: We are not educated and not recognized. I want to be an SGB member (laughed).

W5: Ke patala school fees, ke ya dimitings. Ha ke a lebella ho ruta ngwana. Ke mosebetsi wa matitjhere.

W6: Ha ke ya ruteha. Ha ke tsebe letho, letho kannete. Dintho di fetohile, di ntjha kaofela.

#### **B. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

W1: The department have given the children the rights and abolished punishment, so it is difficult for the principal to manage the school effectively. The principal cannot manage a big school and teachers.

W2: Jo! Teachers themselves do not co-operate. They make it difficult for the principal to manage effectively. The school management is poor.

W3: Children are not supported and encouraged to learn. Teachers are too proud to help.

W5: Principala ha e sa tjheka mosebetsi, jwale e tla tseba jwang haeba matitjhere a ntse a sebetsa. Clapped hands) ke mohlolo ntho eo.

W4: Parents, students and management do not work together. We as parents are only told the decisions. No teamwork or it is because we are not educated?. I don't know.

W6: Sekolo seo se seholo, se hlola principala. Hona jwale o ile a otlala ngwana ka tlelapa, yaba bana ba sekolo ba lwana.

#### **C POVERTY AMONGST FAMILIES**

W2: I am poor and my child has to look for piece jobs after school. And he come home late and tired and is not able to study or do homework.

W5: Ke dula mokhukung le bana ba ka. Ha hona lekunutu, le ha a batla ho ithuta, ha ho na kamore ya ho ithuta.

W4: I sell sweets, cigars and sotho-beer (Mqombothi) to pay their fees. When he comes back from school, he must also help with the selling.

#### **D LACK OF STUDENTS DISCIPLINE**

W1: The students are very stubborn and have no discipline. Some intimidate teachers in class and they deliberately ignore instructions from teachers. They argue and fight female teachers.

W2: Lack of respect for educators is the main cause. They protest in class. They come late to school, nobody punishes them.

W3: Uwi, ha ba tsebe bana bana. I was also stubborn. Ho nthusitseng? I did not finish school. Ba tla llela motsotso. This children do not respect their teachers.

W4: The children today have low morals and I wonder what the schools are doing. There is no discipline. Mehlang ya rona moshanyana o ne a trapuwa. Ke ne nka ba sotha melala ena. (angry).

W5: Bana ha ba hlomphe matitjhere. Ba hloka molao. Ba ratana le ona matitjhere, ba robala le bona, ba tla ba hlompha jwang?

#### **LACK OF EDUCATORS DISCIPLINE**

W1: Educators are always late or absent from school. The principal cannot say a thing. Teaching time is reduced.

W2: Educators have to go on strike for their salaries/increments. Some are on sick leave everytime.

W3: Teachers do as they like because principals cannot say anything, not performing their duties and late for school.

W4: Some teachers absent themselves from school particularly towards month end.

W6: Matitjhere a nwa jwala le bana, ba tla ba hlompha jwang?

#### **E TEACHERS' ATTITUDE**

W4: Teachers do not teach our children correctly because we are poor. When I cannot buy my child an instrument, he chases him out of the class.

W5: Matitjhere a ikgantshetsha bana ba rona ho ba ruta. Ba ruta ba bohlale feela. Ba re ha ba batle ho senya nako ka bana ba botswa.

W2: Teachers do not encourage our children to learn. They only expect better performance.

W3: Teachers verbally express negative attitudes about our children. They call them names such as stupid and idiots. The school is full of students from the farms. They label them as quitters.

W6: Ha hona le bothata sekolong, o botsa dipotso, ngwana wa hao o wa hlekefetswa hobane hothwe mmao o buwa haholo.

W1: Teachers do not use different methods to teach our children. They forget that children have different learning styles.

## **F CLIMATE OF THE SCHOOL**

W2: The surroundings are dirty. Papers lie all around the school (demonstrating with hands) children run up and down the stoep the whole day. Boys work with shirts out of their trousers.

W3: Boys use vulgar language inside the premises. Students behave badly. They fight during school hours. Students have no discipline for teachers. Boys carry knives to school.

W4: As parents we are not welcomed when visiting the school. When you visit the school you struggle to get what you want.

W1: Teachers do not give support to students. The teachers are less concerned with poor, ill or abused children. No communication between students and teachers.

## **G INADEQUATE TRAINING OF TEACHERS**

W2: There is high shortage of experienced and effective teacher in some learning areas, like Biology and Mathematics.

W4: Teacher who are less qualified do not know how to explain some difficult to students. They confuse them.

## **HOW CAN THIS LOW PERFORMANCE BE IMPROVED**

W1: Involve parent in decision making of the school. Discipline is the best medicine. Extra time must be given to students. They should study in the morning and afternoon, even at home.

W2: Teamwork and hardwork: commitment of teachers and students. There must be discipline amongst stake holders. Children should do their assignment in time.

W3: Parents, teachers, learners and the principal should work together. Time must not be wasted.

W4: The leadership and management should be skilled to run the school smoothly. The most important thing is discipline.

W5: Matitjhere a tlohele ho ratana le bana, a rute. Ke bitswe ka dinako tsohle sekolong. Ba boloke nako ya dithuto ba tlohele bolofa.

W6: Hirang matitjhere a rutehileng. Ba hlomphe mosebetsi le bana. Re bitswe dikopanong. Ba fihle ka nako sekolong ba tlohele bolofa.

From the above findings respondents agree on effective parental involvement, discipline, teamwork and most important time must be respected.